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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

**RELEASING VOICE: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DRAMATIC
PERFORMANCE AND FEMALE EMPOWERMENT**

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A Thesis

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ABSTRACT

The research literature points to the necessity of developing spaces so that women can release their true voice. The arts-based approach provides the foundation for a collective creation built by the women under my facilitation. This study includes women's narratives through scripted data surrounding the collective process and concluding data based on the final production. The data is given meaning through the women's narrative accounts and these are then translated into dramatic performance. Places where the female voice is released are explored in a dramatic context, as well as the empowerment gained when releasing and using the true voice, and the effects of empowerment on the women's other facets of existence. The narratives, along with analysis using arts-based techniques, suggest that a relationship occurs between dramatic performance and female empowerment.

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A SONG FOR WOMEN

Voices rise to the bubbling surface
 A scream
 A CRY
 Voices rise to the bubbling surface
 A dream

OR DIE

Who will I be today?
 Muse
 Daughter
 Mother
 Hatred-Love?
 Will I be pretty?
 Will I be LOVED??
 WILL I BE HEARD?

Voices are pushed to the bubbling surface
 Cracking
 Screeching
 Voices are pushed to the bubbling surface
 Crying
 BLEEDING
 A dream fades
 Who am I today?
 Sister
 Confidant
 Tattler
 Gossip-Truth?
 Will I be witty?
 Will I be CARED FOR?
 WILL I BE HEARD?

Two blondes walk into a bar—ouch!
 Were they men or women?
 Did you stop to listen to their story?

Nice hair
 Nice legs
 Nice boobs
 Nice face

I love the way you . . .

ACT

Linette Smith
 Monday, October 11, 2004

Early Thoughts:

I write this knowing that I have something to say.

My battle cry will be my pen to paper or perhaps fingers to keys as I punch away the emotions that run through me this day. I want a platform, a safe place for women to be able to speak with an authentic voice. A voice that has meaning and purpose.

Where does it come from? This lack of courage.

The judgment upon ourselves as women?

When, if ever, do we discover the courage to open our mouths and let the words drop out?

Who helps us? Who guides us?

Where do we go from here?

NOTEBOOK ONE – PROLOGUE: LISTENING TO WOMEN'S VOICES

Second best and safest was never the way of the Hellas, nor is it the way that Augustine and Bunyan trod for us to the City of God . . . Risk is the salt and sugar of life.

Freya Stark (intrepid adventurer)

Theatre is a complex and dynamic medium full of action and change. Yet, as I delve into the work of female performance and authentic voice there is a level of vulnerability that is already present. Being female in the performing world proves to be an interesting area of study. While recalling my own theatre experiences, I remember painful moments intermingled with the joy that is theatre—these have become aspects of my present existence.

The collected experiences of the courageous women involved in this study will advance our understanding of female development. Those involved in theatre must consider their memories of theatre roles, rehearsals, and performances. What will they experience when remembering? What benefits will there be to them and to other women who may follow in their footsteps? Norris (2000) states that “the entire play building process is not linear, but a spiral in which the stages of collection, analysis, and dissemination overlap as each influences one another” (p. 46).

In the process of building what became “L34:14, The Book of Lilith,” the spiral was ever present—the collection of stories became actual text in the play, as well as material for discussion. In addition, the analysis of the data discovered through journal entries, discussions, and rehearsals enabled the actors to define their characters, and themes began to emerge as we discussed our theatre histories. Finally, the rehearsal process then solidified the

research because the text resonated with all of us, eventually allowing us to discover an untapped voice within ourselves, which was played before an audience. It was a risk we all felt we had to take in order to be heard.

Brecht argues that the theatre should be a hammer. (Wilett, 1964) Theatre must challenge people to look critically at their own situation and to change it. In this study, however, we are trying to build a platform for our voices by sharing our current identities. We have a responsibility to each other that is larger than any of us. We have to be open to an audience. But before that relationship can be studied, the relationship of actor-to-actor and actor-to-director must be considered.

When actors are given words to read from a play text, they immediately form a relationship with the words. On an entirely different level, when those words are spoken honestly to another character (actor) on stage, there is another relationship that occurs. We, as actors, initially discover how we feel about the words and, later, discover how we feel about saying those words to the other person on stage. This speaking becomes a form of connection that is not only the key to acting, but is also the key to developing an honest vision of oneself.

Another person becomes key to the discovery and development process—the director. During the rehearsal process, the director guides the relationship that is developing between actors. With the director's guidance, the actors explore the relationship to the words they speak and the acting itself. Through their relationship with the text, other actors, and the director, actors begin exploring another aspect of themselves. An internal part of themselves that is exposed through external forces that are present in the acting process. The key to

believable acting is honest reacting. Booth and Thornley-Hall (1991) explain the power of exploring and reacting in the following way:

Role lets children leave the narrow confines of their own words and gives them entry into new forms of existence. At the same time, they must find a sense of their relationship to this fictional life, the "me in the role" and "the role in me." When children participate in drama, they are in charge of building the dramatic experience through their actions and words. They become the drama, discovering ideas and directions that will surprise and change them. Because meanings are being made and not given, the children will find responses and language powers that are unexpected, engendered by the collective drive for group meaning. (p. 95)

This striving for meaning begins the process of building the relationship between actor and director, and eventually a relationship with an audience. The rehearsal process is the first step because it can define a safe place for the discoveries to occur. Boal (1995) states, "Theatre allows us to converse with our souls—to passionately pursue and discover ways of living with ourselves and others" (p. xix). This conversation is the first step towards reaching those untapped parts of ourselves.

The project has brought out emotions as it begged us to really look at our roles in the world of theatre. We knew that we wanted to make an impact with the roles that we chose to portray; and also wanted to strengthen our own lives in the process. An impact can only be made when we see significant changes in ourselves; this discovery makes us re-think our methods, our madness, and our genius. It is a rainy day the day that I write the first draft of a script that looks very different from how it appears in production, it pours rain outside and I know that the force of the water will change the earth forever. Yet, I ask do we as theatre

artists have the ability to do the same? Do we have the ability to change? The words of the women echo in my head from a meeting we had the day before: "When I'm on stage my voice is clear and strong; when I'm in my normal life it's not quite the same. I have to learn that I am, that I am enough, enough in both situations" (Rosa, January 15, 2005).

The remarkable young women involved in the project have experienced the realm of theatre through drama education as well as community theatre projects. In this study, I consider the stories and lives of these women while reflecting on my own experience in theatre. The outcome is an original production—these female theatre artists found a way to share their stories, while at the same time forever changing their perception of themselves. Much like the world that changes outside my window while the rain pelts down, these women will change and theatre will be the facilitator.

Rosa¹ is a graduate of a high school theatre program who has worked with me for two years on productions as both an actor and a technician. She has always had a big space in her heart for the work we do in the school theatre program and has a deep appreciation for the theatre world. Her story is significant. She has grown so much through the theatre and this growth is quite evident in the script.

Lily, who has recently graduated with a journalism degree, is also passionate about theatre, but in a quiet way. She is discovering herself and is realizing that there is a story to tell and that, perhaps, someone will be present to listen. She brought a level-headedness and calm to the group, which was appreciated during the rehearsal process.

Another voice among us was Eve who told many stories about being silenced and not having a chance to really develop her voice. She spoke of peers and teachers who demanded

¹ All names used in this study are pseudonyms for the people involved in the production. The pseudonyms match the character names used in the production.

that she speak up, which silenced her even more. However, through her work in musical theatre she found that her voice had a place to soar, and she could discover the sound and power of it. Eve left us before the play to make a living and pay for her education. I was sad to see her go; she left an indelible mark on the play and helped shape all of our characters. Her voice became one of the many layers of Lilith's character.

This work began four years ago when I asked six women at a university theatre class to share the ways that the dramatic process has influenced their development as women. These women told how drama and dramatic moments impacted them personally.

All six women had drama in common: They were either preparing to teach it or on leave from teaching drama. They were all participants in a theatre for social change class offered through the Faculty of Education at the university and had studied the dramatic process throughout the term. I knew that drama was our common bond and that it would be the thread holding us together. This unique group of women was passionate about theatre, and I will carry their words with me.

The study addresses the concept that women are empowered through the process of drama. Drama is a critical process because it asks people to look inward and communicate their discoveries. The internal findings are juxtaposed with the external forces that surround people— together, these are the keys to developing character. This is highly powerful, as it also becomes a tool for personal development and personal empowerment. A sense of empowerment may be especially critical to female development, as women—especially young women—struggle with developing personal identity in the world.

I asked the six study participants to consider why drama may have been significant during their growth and to pinpoint a time when they experienced a direct correlation between positive self-growth and their work on the dramatic process.

The women's stories reflect a range of experiences—from those that were deeply painful to those that were relayed with a playful light-heartedness—about the effect drama had on their development. Friere (1993) contends that “the insistence that the oppressed engage in reflection on their concrete situation is not a call to armchair revolution. On the contrary, reflection-true reflection leads to action” (p. 21). The wisdom of Friere and similar contributions made by Augusto Boal are highly applicable to the journey the women in this study had when finding their voice and gaining an honest sense of themselves. Both authors, who work from an artistic and activist perspective, aim at developing personal strength for those whom are known to be oppressed in society. These six women saw themselves in this category.

Lilith (November 30, 2004) shares in her writing: “I think drama provides a voice in a world that often cannot or does not want to hear truths. It is a way of escaping all of the nagging little voices that say you can't tell.” In ‘Forum Theatre’ Boal (1993) explains how a person who may be repressed goes through a theatrical “rehearsal” while engaged in activities that encompass working a way out of the repression (p. 150). Boal's theatre technique provides actors with the tools to discover empowerment and voice. Similarly, Friere looks at enabling the oppressed through theatre. Friere believed in the power of the spoken word whether on the stage or at some other public forum. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1993), he writes, “If in speaking their word that people by naming the world, transform it, dialogue imposes itself as the way by which they achieve significance as human

beings" (p. 69). Friere, like Boal, believed that theatre and the dramatic process can affect positive change in people. The women in this study have each shared this epiphany and, through their writing, expressed their transformation (Smith, 2000, pp. 4-5).

The women realized that they had, within their reach, a means to express their honest, untapped self. This new sense of identity could be communicated to others, and they could share events of their choosing within the context of drama. Drama is an active participatory event enabling an individual or group to realize their potential or see outcomes by rehearsing them or playing through them; therefore, it is essential to create the space for this rehearsal to occur. In the article "Hamlet's Mother and Other Women," one line stands out. I believe it encompasses the reasoning behind May Sarton's memoirs. "Sarton chose the way of solitude with all its costs, and heartened with the news of this adventure, this terrible daring, might be endured" (Heilbrun, 1988, p. 166). Only through the telling will people understand what she truly lived and the value of the experience. "It is because in that profoundly inventive work she has, with rare artistry, claimed for women their chance to be both solitary and triumphant" (p. 169).

The words of the six women contributed to both "Releasing Voice" and "L34:14" as the women began unearthing the power that theatre has when releasing voice.

You promised me my life; but you lied. You think that life is nothing but not being stone dead. It is not the bread and water I fear: I can live on bread: when have I asked for more? It is no hardship to drink water if the water be clean. Bread has no sorrow for me, and water no affliction. But to shut me from the light of the sky and the sight of the fields and flowers; to chain my feet so that I can never ride with the soldiers

nor climb the hills; to make me breathe foul damp darkness . . . (Scene VI, Saint Joan, p. 674)

As a woman, student, and educator involved in the dramatic process, I often question where spaces exist, spaces where women are able to act freely and be their true selves in order to communicate meaning with and among other women. In *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (2000), bell hooks writes,

We are taught that women are "natural" enemies, that solidarity will never exist between us because we cannot, should not, and do not bond with one another. We have learned these lessons well. We must unlearn them if we are to build a sustained feminist movement. We must learn to live and work in solidarity. We must learn the true meaning and value of Sisterhood. (p. 43)

Open communication between women may not be common, but it did occur during the making of "L34:14." There are early experiences in my life that supported a positive arena for women to collaborate, even though there may have been a lack of facilitation or structure to do this. A couple of summers ago I attended a speech workshop offered through Theatre Alberta Dramaworks' summer theatre program. The fortunate part of this was that the speech class was entirely female. This created a unique, supportive relationship where women could gather together and take risks. Usually one-gender theatre programs are discouraged, but in this case it was a great gift to both the instructor and the group of women present. All the women expressed similar feelings; they felt comfortable with each other and wondered if this was because the lack of males ensured a less competitive environment.

bell hooks (2000) states, "women are enriched when we bond with one another" (p. 45). I fully realized the power of her statement when I bonded with other females at a

graduate theatre course this past year at the University of Alberta. The course centred on theatre for social change and again was made up entirely of female students. I wondered about the dynamics of a group of women working together while trying to find a common collective vision based on the social issues presented to us. Like before, I found that we came together through the dramatic process, and we nurtured and found strength in each other through this difficult dramatic work.

These women tell the heartfelt stories about the drama and dramatic moments that have impacted them. I view drama as a vital process because it asks people to look internally and communicate what is discovered. This is a powerful tool for personal development and empowerment. Empowerment may be imperative for female development.

Ruth, one of the participants in the class, shares one aspect of the process that helped her realize her sense of self in an environment that has been enabling:

That's the power of drama. Each of us expresses what we can, allowing vulnerability. That's where the safeguards come in. If everyone is vulnerable, then generally no one takes advantage of the situation or intentionally hurts the others. In fact, I have never met such kind and caring individuals. (journal entry, November 23 2003)

Eve, another participant in the study, says,

Drama has allowed me to explore a little bit of what it is like to be different kinds of women. In doing this I have been able to pick and choose which pieces I want to be a part of who I am. I guess it has helped me to define myself and to set goals as to what I want to improve. It has also given me a sense of importance. (journal entry, November 30 2003).

The drama environment seemed to foster personal growth as a result of the overall feeling of belonging projected by members of the drama group. Judith says, "I feel as if I belong. The strength and sense of play that I feel when I am surrounded by people with spirit and passion is something that I thrive on" (journal entry, November 23 2004). Or, as Eve contributes, "I become part of a group, working towards an end or a vision" (journal entry, November 30 2003).

In addition, Ruth explains:

The people with whom I am working have control by the way in which they interact with me. They can make me feel brilliant or stupid, creative or blocked, happy or sad, included or rejected. That seems to be a lot of control that others have over my emotions. It is. (journal entry, November 23 2003).

Ruth expresses what can often occur in drama as participant actors ride waves of emotion and expose themselves to the emotions of others. Drama becomes the arena for accepting some level of vulnerability; trust and safety are built and constantly present as integral aspects of the process. Boal (1995) elaborates:

Theatre is a language through which human beings can engage in active dialogue on what is important to them. It allows individuals to create a safe space that they may inhabit in groups and use to explore the interactions which make up their lives. It is a lab for problem solving, for seeking options, and for practicing solutions. (p. xix)

In many of the stories the women spoke about feelings of belonging and a sense of ownership over their work and their words. Mary, one of the younger participants, shares her story:

Growing up in a family of all boys, it was always a struggle to get my word in. But when I was on stage I found my voice, my "power" so to speak. I knew I was being heard and this gave me a tremendous amount of confidence in other areas. (journal entry, November 30 2003).

In *Performing Women* (1999), Oddey writes,

For some women the enjoyment is in totally escaping into a heightened, accentuated state of feeling alive, which emanates from a spontaneous creative energy and engagement between performer and audience. The moment when it all comes together, however briefly, is what these women aspire to, whether it is for an unconscious sense of empowerment, a discovery of truth or as an outlet to release repressed emotions. (p. 281)

All of the women who I spoke to have experienced that moment through performing with the audience listening and, as a result, they have felt empowered when everything comes together, or simply by being present on the stage. Judith, when reflecting on her drama experience as a youth, remembers,

Everywhere we went, we seemed to take the room by storm. The cafeteria, a classroom, even a party. There was no bullying involved; I don't even think we knew the power we had; we just had a ton of passion for everything we did and it showed. (journal entry, November 23, 2003).

hooks (2000) writes that "women need to come together in situations where there will be ideological disagreements and work to change that interaction so communication occurs" (p. 65). For me, this created the possibility of a place to explore the notion of women feeling empowered by releasing their honest voice. The ideal is to create a space where women can

voice their honest selves and feel passionate doing it, not feel reserved, or limited, or confined. I began this writing with the women's brief but consequential stories because their words, combined with personal experience, are what propelled me and encouraged me to delve wholeheartedly into this research.

The remarkable readings from "The Journal of Curriculum Theorizing" (Morris, M, 2001) inspired me to do two things: think about my identity as a woman and the opportunities that women have within the arts. When I write about opportunities, I am thinking about those times and places where women can find and express their authentic selves, or at least begin the long walk towards being able to recognize themselves as individuals.

The article, "Painting Life Histories" (2001), by Susan Finley, is especially moving and thought provoking. Finley writes about the life of a mannequin, aptly named Maggie, who is a strong image for me as a woman. Finley describes Maggie's conception. The way that Finley and her family take great care of this female form is quite touching. While reading this article I began to project my need for the female form to be cherished and began thinking about the ever present and desperate destruction of the female form.

Consequently, Rowena Crowe's article, "Encountering Angels through Artful Inquiry" (2001), compounded my thoughts about honoring and protecting the female form. I reeled in pain with the thought of women being tossed into the back seat, and being suffocated by duffel bags, as in Finley's piece where the image of the silenced mannequin was so disturbing. Both articles expressed some of the darker side of the female experience, but this was significantly surpassed by the hope and inspiration that I felt reading about their methods to enable communication with ourselves and with other women.

Deborah Britzman (1991) defines the struggle for this level of communication in the following passage:

The struggle for voice begins when a person attempts to communicate meaning to someone else. Finding the words, speaking for oneself, and feeling heard by others, are all part of this struggle. While tone, accent, and style qualify meaning, meaning is never realized by the individual alone. The struggle originates with the individual, is shaped through social interaction and mediated by language. Voice suggests relationships: the individual's relationship to the meaning of her or his lived experience and hence to language, and the individual's relationship to the other, since understanding is social. It may be sparked by personal intent, but voice is always negotiated within context and situations, and by the meanings of others. The struggle for voice, then, is always subjective, dynamic, interactive, and incomplete; it is never a matter of mechanical correspondence between the speaker's intentions, the language, and the listener. (p. 23)

Britzman's quote speaks about language and social interaction: Language doesn't have to be communicated through words. The expression or the story can be "voiced" through art and photography as found in Rowena Crowe's article. These methods are used to share personal journeys and stories that speak on a deeply emotional level. It is simply glorious that women can communicate not only to each other about their stories, but also to the world through artistic means.

"Women are enriched when we bond with one another" (bell hooks, 2000, p. 45). I am repeating this quote because when this relationship happens, drama as an art form comes to the forefront. It is another means to express or voice our ideas or our identities. There is a

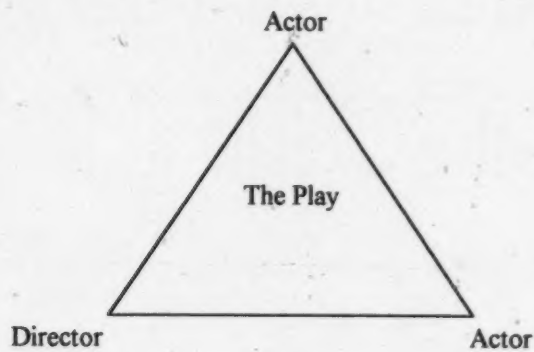
great deal of power in expressing the female voice through pictures and figures because we are bombarded with images of perceived perfection our entire lives and live comparing ourselves to the false images that are presented to us. We are bombarded with media images of flawless beauty—in reality, this beauty is unattainable. In magazines, television, the Internet, radio, and, even in the workplace, we are faced with ideals about how we should look. As a result, we are constantly questioning our identity and whether we really fit into the mould that is presented to us. It is in this constant questioning that our honest voices remain untapped. But theatre is an image-based forum that enables us to try new characters and build other parts of ourselves. Through the building and, we hope, the strengthening of ourselves, we can discover our strengths and enter the world with a new-found perspective. Theatre is the place where discovery is key and discoveries can be made through the relational structure that is already present in the form.

The relationship is a reciprocal one that begins with the spoken text presented by an actor during the rehearsal process. First, the actor interprets the text with her own sense of experience and with what is immediately felt upon saying the words aloud. Next, the director, who guides the interpretation and formation of the character with the actor, becomes another part of the relationship. Third, the audience, when given the opportunity, responds to what has been interpreted and developed by the actor and director. This sense of reciprocity is present in theatre and ensures that a relationship will develop.

In our case, the relationship to the text was a key first step in the process. While speaking the words, the women were given the opportunity to develop a new aspect, or change aspects, of themselves. Next, when relating to each other through their character choices, their honest re-acting became another avenue for exploring themselves. Finally,

when given the opportunity to play their character for an audience, the actor participants realized that they had a new forum for their newly developed voice. Lilith, one of the actor participants, put it succinctly when she realized that acting “wasn’t becoming someone else, it was just another part of you” (debriefing after rehearsal, February 20, 2005). The triangulated relationship that occurs in theatre is quite powerful and necessary not only to the art but, in our study, to the development of the self.

Figure 1



NOTEBOOK TWO – SETTING THE STAGE: WHY FINDING VOICE IS NECESSARY
FOR WOMEN

Once upon a time there was a dream

A dream of women.

A dream of women coming together and turning the world around.

Turning the world around and making it over.

A dream of women, all women being sisters.

A dream of caring; a dream of protection

A dream of peace

Pat Parker, *Womanslaughter*, 1978

In *In a Different Voice* (1982), Carol Gilligan writes, "The wind of tradition blowing through women is a chill wind, because it brings a message of exclusion. . . . The message to women is: keep quiet and notice the absence of women and say nothing" (p. 14). I have a dream of women coming together through the dramatic process to release voice and to support each other in their release. It is also crucial for women to find spaces where they can come together for the release of their voices, which proves to be an act of empowerment. Progress has been made for women but there is much more progress to struggle towards.

In researching a means to release voice, I came across a speech by Audre Lorde (quoted by Naomi Wolfe for a commencement address at Scripps College). When I read words like Audre Lorde's and Naomi Wolfe's, I know there is much work to be done not only to release women's voice, but sometimes, sadly, to find the female voice.

My silences had not protected me. Your silences will not protect you. . . . What are the words you do not yet have? What are the tyrannies you swallow day by day and attempt to make your own, until you will sicken and die of them, still in silence? We have been socialized to respect fear more than our own need for language.

I began to ask each time: "what's the worst that could happen to me if I tell this truth?" Unlike women in other countries, our breaking silence is unlikely to have us jailed, "disappeared" or run off the road at night. Our speaking out will irritate some people, get us called bitchy or hypersensitive and disrupt some dinner parties. And then our speaking will permit other women to speak, until laws are changed and lives are saved and the world is altered forever. (1992).

The loud and clear message calls for action from women for women. To me the theatre is a place of and for action. It is a place for the telling of lived experiences and for changing and challenging pre-existing experiences. It is a place to investigate the relationship between dramatic performance and female empowerment. Martha Graham once inspired dancer Agnes de Mille with the following "There is vitality, a life force, energy, a quickening, that is translated through you into action, and because there is only one of you in all time, this expression is unique" (Andrews, 1997).

Drama and theatre are platforms on which to create life forces—to build new worlds and new citizens who may play and grow within these worlds. When we ponder about the actual act of theatre or the dramatic process, we are compelled towards the power and presence that this art form takes within the world. We then wonder: What are the factors that exist that block ideas and situations or, more notably, which block the development of women? As well, what could possibly be within the reach of women to enable them to see

past or actually remove these blocks? As a drama and theatre practitioner, I question whether drama is an enabler for those women who feel blocked. I certainly hope so. In turn, I question if drama is the means to get them into action. In the world that I know, there are many forces working against the development of women as individuals, their creativity, and, consequently, their personality.

The dramatic process can be the ideal playing space for enabling people to look beyond the "idols" and, through positive relationships and the realization of a new perspective, tap into another sense of power. Early on in our lives—in childhood—we begin life with a sense of play and the ability to be open and receptive to new things. During this innocent and playful time, we rarely block anything out and we see possibilities in the world rather than blockades. Nachmanovitch writes in *Free Play* (1990):

The adventures, difficulties and even suffering inherent in growing up can serve to develop or educe our original voice, but more often they bury it. It may be developed or underdeveloped, excited or inhibited, by the way we are raised and trained and treated in life. (p. 16)

In dramatic arts the voice is often equated with the personal development of the individual. How our voice disappears or is not developed fascinates me because I equate it with the blocks mentioned previously. As a person who lives in the centre of the educational dramatic process, I want to see the process enable women to articulate their sense of self and their strength and, consequently, their existence in the world. Can we, through the art of the dramatic process, either revert back to this time of play, tapping into our memories, or develop the foresight essential for nurturing the development of expressive, articulate beings?

Through the art of drama, this life force or energy is often observed and then translated into action through the process of dramatic study. Drama can be and has been viewed as a medium for change and growth. As the art of drama and theatre practice enable women to investigate the world through acting, projecting, imagining, and hypothesizing, the art can be seen as a powerful and perhaps life-altering tool.

Theatre can also be interpreted as the art of telling someone else's story and the dramatic process can be seen as the research into that person's story. Through the relevant and available literature, I was drawn towards stories of people empowered or changed through the art of drama. I was especially touched by the work that provided a means to empower female adolescents through drama. The great drama practitioners like Way, Boal, and Courtney were at the forefront of research into child development through drama and offered great insight into practical activities that could lead to the development of a sense of self and adolescent self-esteem.

The findings in the journals available on this topic were intriguing and informative—specifically those that addressed at-risk youth who felt empowered by or experienced a sense of personal growth through drama and theatre. In most of the publications I studied during the early part of my investigation, drama was found to be an in-depth exploration that allowed individuals to discover levels of creativity, risk taking, and often their voice.

Throughout the literature, drama was frequently seen as a means to develop a sense of personal identity as well as a tool for empowerment. In one way or another, the articles and texts studied for this research address the sense of empowerment achieved through drama or theatre practice. Each, in turn, looks at providing individuals with a context that is both safe and inspirational: an environment which invites individuals to express their honest and

untapped sense of self and discover their voice through the process of drama. I find that the literature is entirely applicable to a study of women as we are still looking for those contexts that welcome the power of the female voice.

To aid in the discovery of drama environments or contexts that provide spaces to release voice and, consequently, empower women, it was necessary to reflect on my own background of silence. Delving into that past is at times difficult but, as is practiced in narrative inquiry, it provides a context—specifically, a realization of the full potential of the dramatic process and context for women. I remember loving drama in school as it provided a space for me to play, connect, and release the many voices that were necessary for me to develop as a woman. I recall one memory in which I experienced the power of playing a villainous role:

There is great power in playing the villain, especially when you are sharing the stage with your peers in junior high. Junior high—I can honestly state—was the worst time of my life. I would not repeat a single day of those years; well, maybe the trips to *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*. But other than those nights, junior high for me is a memory that can stay buried with the treasure in Atlantis, may it forever be lost.

Perhaps this is why I so enjoyed teaching junior high. I knew the peril that students were living through. The period of adolescence is a grueling time, especially in a girl's life. The changes to their bodies, their personalities, their relationships are overwhelming at the best of times. So the search for spaces where girls not only comfortable but also accepted can be crucial to their existence.

I can definitely equate junior high with a jungle, an animalistic fight for survival, a who is the king of the shit heap kind of experience. The ray of light in the midst—

that's *midst*, not *mist*—and there are no gorillas to speak of, anyway, the ray of light during this tumultuous time for me was the drama room.

The drama room was a place where one could find all the creatures of this junior high jungle—the jocks, the preps, the bangers, the punks, and the nerds—the nerds happened to be my group because we were in the academic class. Now, to look at us you might not think *nerd*, but it was the label we got because we were smart. Now, bringing all of these creatures together in one space must have been a real challenge for our drama teacher who is supposed to have us work collectively to create brilliance and drama that compel and move and make our parents proud. Well, if cliques existed in the hall, they definitely existed in the option rooms. We worked with our own species, we staked out our territory and, except for year play, rarely ventured towards the other territories.

Ah, the year play. The time to shine, to star, to be for a brief moment the important person in the room. I was fortunate at this point in my life to get many lead roles or very strong supporting roles and it was in the playing of those roles that I could rise above the creatures that felt that they ruled the jungle. The best times were the gift of playing the villain, the bad child, the woman who runs the orphanage, the witch. You see, with each of these roles came moments of power, of strength, of excuses to stand up to and speak or yell at those who had made you (*me??*) feel small or meaningless.

The long slender dress clings to my body and I balance in my mother's high-heeled shoes, wanting to tower over those who were my children in the orphanage. I boom out the lines, ordering the children to clean, fold, and stuff. The lines flow off my

tongue with a razor sharpness that bites into the children's ears and convinces the audience that I am pure evil and wickedly believable in my role as headmistress of the girls' orphanage.

The position of power or importance could be obtained for a brief moment and sustained longer through applause, laughter, and any other recognition. The lead villain roles were a way to get back at those who condemned me as the "brainiac" or nerd in the school. It worked quite well for my entire eclectic group of artsy people.

Playing the villain was also a great deal of fun. During a time when school was not very much fun, having the opportunity to play a role for a few months that had some fantastic elements was a way to find the joy in those dark moments called junior high. (Journal entry, February, 20, 2003)

The curtain has begun to rise and, through the process, will reveal to us women standing strong on centre stage—centre stage not only in the theatre but also in North American society. "The feminist movement has brought to the forefront the necessity of listening to women's voices and appreciating the distinctive insights of women" (Dolgopol, 1995, p. 1). Thus, the transformation of women from the role of spectator to the role of actor is a central theme in the feminist movement—the transformation can be seen as a necessary aspect of the development of women's voice and identity in North American society. By *voice*, I mean the ability to express the honest self, those untapped honest feelings, and to also express oneself without limitation. Or, as Rosa writes in her performance journal,

I like the idea of playing someone else because I saw a change in myself. I was super quiet and it took awhile to be able to "voice" myself. As a kid even, I hardly spoke, even to my family. I clung to my mom and dad. In junior high drama the changes

began and then in high school I really opened up. My first role I kind of fell into because someone dropped out of the play and my drama teacher said, "You're doing it." She didn't even give me time to respond and, before I knew it, I was speaking the words of the character and I had a new way of seeing things in the world, through my "Soft Soap" character's eyes. (August 10, 2004)

In the book *Performing Women* (1999), Alison Oddey explains, "I want to argue that performing enhances a performer's sense of identity defining the self and who she is. Performing provides the opportunity for identity construction or the expression of multiple identities" (p. 279). Through the experience of drama, females can extrapolate from their characters and project to an audience or director and, therefore, begin to connect to their work. As women begin to experiment with ideas about who they are and what they can become—as they personally explore their selves—they discover that this process can be incredibly freeing. Richard Courtney in *Re-Cognizing* (1988) writes,

When we are imagining, we are organizing into patterns with which we can work. Dramatic action develops an acquired skill; we learn to externalize our imagining through impersonation when we are young and we extend this to a whole range of possibilities. To begin with we learn slowly and with many mistakes which of our imaginings can take dramatic form to our satisfaction and which cannot. (p. 103)

I question and am presently intrigued to discover if individuals in this study can develop the ability to hypothesize and experiment through various exercises within the dramatic process. This experimentation may aid in self-development and raise the conscious level of the personal voice; strengthening this sense of self and expression through personal

voice is key to a woman's growth. Women have struggled for centuries to find these qualities.

Now that women have started moving towards centre stage, they also must begin grasping the power made available to them through drama. We see the transformation of women from spectators to performers—from voiceless beings to beings who project their voice.

In *Drama Education in the Lives of Girls* (2000), Gallagher states,

Doing drama and building stories creates a restlessness and a tension in the room; it is about ascertaining the imperatives of the group. The social intercourse in drama is about more than being sensitive to others; it is about being sensitized by the actions and words of others. (p. 43)

If the actions and words of others can sensitize, then one begins to understand the needs of others and of self. "Drama structures have an opportunity therefore, to intervene in spaces normally advantageous to boys and offer the possibility for alternative discursive patterns to be tested" (p. 77). An environment that is conducive to personal growth is often seen as an ideal; however, through drama, this opportunity is available to women.

It is essential to recognize that drama is not simply a personal and therapeutic means of developing the individual. In addition to these effects, there are significant side effects that occur as individuals develop skills in cooperation and gain confidence. The findings were quite remarkable in the study, "The Impact of Acting on Student Actors" (1999), carried out by Burgoyne and Poulin. Student actors found that their acting experiences had a significant impact on their personal and professional lives. The results of the study showed that the impact of acting was not only on the stage but also on the students' lives off the stage. The results of the study showed that the impact of acting was not only on the stage but also on the students' lives off the stage.

character development. The positive consequences reported involved some type of growth. Various interviewees explained "that acting experiences enhanced sensitivity, empathy, and awareness; strengthened sense of identity and values; facilitated emotional growth; improved understanding of self and others and cultivated skills in relating to others" (p. 3).

During the dramatic process, individuals need to develop or understand a character or situation and, as a result, they can begin to engage in the "social other" view of the world. And as they share the story of that character or place, they may develop the skills and confidence to present their honest untapped selves to the world. At present there seems to be an array of possibilities for the development of individuals, especially females, through drama.

In the past, when women have been allowed to speak or appear in public it has been *in disguise*, hidden behind make-up veils, deceptive clothing, carefully regulated movement, names that obliterated their own identities or make them tangential to a man. It is therefore appropriate that one radical gesture of feminist theatre is to decrease the distance between playwright and actress, actress and character, to build without distortion or protection the stories told on stage from the experiences of those who make theatre. (Keyssar, 1984, p. 5)

During the dramatic process, a shared space for discovering, risking, and learning to become one's honest self is created and nurtured through trust and a sense of ensemble.

Drama is a powerful medium for the transmission of idea, and theatre particularly so. The audience sees the actors. The actors see the audience. As the play progresses it is judged. The play changes. The players are changed. The audience is changed. It is a powerful exchange of experience. . . . The unease I feel about living in a society that

is constructed around male needs and male desires is at its least when I'm working in theatre—perhaps because it is the art of transformation. (Todd, 1984, pp. 115–116)

Lilith's realization that "acting is just another part of you" (Rehearsal, February 25, 2005). speaks of that transformation. There is a change that occurs: not a complete denial of who we are or an abandonment of our sense of self, but a new way of looking at ourselves and the world.

I never really knew that I could do it (acting). I was a weird kid who didn't really have any friends and didn't really talk to my family either. I was a loner and as a result had zero confidence in myself—except as a writer. I always knew that I was good at writing and this gave me a connection to my teachers as it gave us something to talk about. But as a talker and actor, I wanted to do it but didn't think I could. I tried in high school and kind of got a bug for it, and then knew that it would be a part of me but thought maybe only as a playwright. Then, after doing a few musicals in high school and leaving the scene for awhile, I woke up one day and realized I did want to do this and I just started to get out there and then experiences like this come up and I realize even more that I can do it and I am capable and I do matter, because I matter to myself. I know now that acting will always be a part of me; it's who I am.

(journal entry, March 3, 2005)

Developing this sense of self and expression through personal voice is key to a woman's development. Deborah Britzman in *Practice Makes Practice* (1991) describes silence and the various types of knowledge:

Silence, a position in which women experience themselves as mindless and voiceless and subject to the whims of external authority; received knowledge, a perspective from which women conceive themselves as capable of receiving, even reproducing, knowledge from the all-knowing external authorities but not capable of creating knowledge on their own; subjective knowledge, a perspective from which truth and knowledge are conceived as personal, private, and subjectively known or intuited; procedural knowledge, a position in which women are invested in learning and applying objective procedures for obtaining and communicating knowledge; and constructed knowledge, a position in which women view all knowledge as contextual, experience themselves as creators of knowledge, and value both subjective and objective strategies for knowing. (p. 24)

In the dramatic arts, the voice can be equated with the personal development of the individual. How individuals find their voice, strengthen their voice, and choose to use that voice is the question asked in this study. Drama can be an integral factor for women as they experience the performance process and the process of learning how to express who and what they are. "It's alright to be a woman" (Lilith, Rehearsal, February 25, 2005). The New York Feminist Theatre Company supports this notion with the following:

We make theatre out of our lives, our dreams, our feelings, our fantasies. We make theatre by letting out the different parts of us that we have pushed inside all of our lives. . . . Making theatre out of these private parts of ourselves is one way we are trying everyday to take our own experiences seriously, to accept our feelings as valid and real. (1985, p. 5)

I hope that the work that the women and I do together to discover the relationship between dramatic performance and female empowerment will be a process of healing and growing. In the text, *With Both Eyes Open* (1988), Johnson and Kalven write,

Women have made history, yet have been kept from knowing their history and from interpreting history, either their own or that of men. Women have been systematically excluded from the enterprise of creating symbol systems, philosophies, science and law. Women have not only been educationally deprived throughout historical time in every known society; they have been excluded from theory formation. The contradiction between women's centrality and active role in creating society and their marginality in the meaning giving process of interpretation and explanation has been a dynamic force causing women to struggle against their condition. (p. 2)

It seems necessary to create spaces where women not only create but also claim their histories; for us it will be the collective theatre space. The theatre is a place for women to reclaim their voices, not find them, because they already have them.

To a similar extent is the relational aspect of power, although it is not usually equal. Furthermore, in *Practice Makes Practice* (1991), Britzman explains,

Understanding the context of power, in concert with the relationships it articulates and effectuates, allows us to move beyond an abstract notion of individual autonomy to construct a cultural theory of meaning grounded in social circumstances and material practices. Moreover, any theory of power must also be sensitive to the capacity of persons to interpret and intervene in their world. Such a view of human agency allows us to raise the question: Could persons have acted and interpreted

differently? That is, what enables or constrains particular forms of practices and the discourses that legitimate or challenge them? (p. 18)

Women need spaces in order to challenge the frames that define those spaces. I realized that drama existed as a way to articulate my own thoughts and feelings, so it is possible that this process could also exist for young girls involved in drama. There suddenly seemed to be so much more that could be investigated as I ripped into the untold stories on my journey through the literature. Many questions arose. For example, I questioned what process of growth and empowerment females actually experience through drama or theatre practice. Now, there was quite an array of books and articles available on the study of drama and theatre as a developmental and confidence-building tool. Similarly, there were fairly recent and readily available publications on female empowerment, voice, confidence, and overall development. However, to find the two topics, process of growth and empowerment combined, was difficult. This intrigued and inspired me to address adolescent female empowerment through drama, as it seems, thus far, to be relatively uncharted territory. The literature I focused on displayed, most often, one aspect or the other with rare gems discussing both. To marry the two seemed a formidable, lengthy, but imperative task.

In former times acting simply meant putting on a disguise. When you took off the disguise, there was the old face under it. Now it's clear that the wearing of the disguise changes the person. As he takes the disguise off, his face is changed from having worn it. The stage performance informs the life performance and is informed by it. (Chaikin, p. 6).

With the ever-present question of focus on the self and the story of self, drama seemed the ideal means or playing space to disseminate information about adolescent female

voice and empowerment. In the article, *Deconstructing Barbie* (1999), O'Hara and Lanoux found that, while reflecting on childhood, most people recall stories of learning and growth and sadness, challenge and triumph and joy, and in reflecting on adolescence, most women recall stories of survival (p. 8). Yet, is it possible that, either through dissecting or disseminating their stories, young women may find a sense of empowerment? In addition, will they discover that drama can be the means of honest expression?

If we look to the previous work done in theatre, specifically in the *Theatre of the Oppressed*, the stories of survival can actually be activated to bring life-altering moments onto the stage and into the lives of others. Drama enables individuals to make their mistakes within a safe context, to try out the "what ifs?" (Way, 1967, p.177) and, possibly, to fail without complete destruction of the self. In *A Dramatic Difference in Education in Chicago*, Linda Mabry (1997) states,

Too often in education, we think learning should be painful. I'm convinced people learn more when they're having fun. We have to get people to see that education improves when people feel good, not stupid, and connected to what they're learning.
(p. 20)

Through the process of drama, students, especially female students, can extrapolate and project, and begin to connect to their work. Trying on different characters in order to experiment with ideas about who they are and what they can become, is a process that can be very freeing as the student personally explores the self. Chapman, in her article "Female Impersonators" (2000), suggests that female development can be "a response to a crisis of having to choose between a connectedness to oneself or to others" (p. 126). This volatile but

exciting time in a young woman's life is something I wish to investigate in the realm of the theatre.

A question that concerns me is what do young women garner from their experience in high school theatre that affects their individual development? By examining and possibly conducting the rehearsal process of at least one major school production where young women can portray major roles, I wish to ascertain whether a situation of empowerment and individual development and growth is created. The process will include—as a focal point—the stories of the girls' experiences during the audition and rehearsal processes, through to the performance(s). In addition, I would like to have the participants keep and share journals about their experiences with the theatre event, as well as any effects on their personal or academic lives. Through observation, interview conversation, and journal entries, I hope to capture a sense of how drama can be an integral and positive aspect of female development during adolescence. The theatre experience—taking on a role and experiencing a new perspective—provides a powerful environment for growth.

Chapman and other researchers look to the drama experience as one of personal awareness and growth. After viewing a high school production of *Damn Yankees*, Chapman (2000) shares an account examining whether theatre provides “a potential relationship between developing female identities in adolescence and the viewed and enacted gender performances on a high school theatre stage” (p. 123). She notes that gaining self-confidence and self-esteem are parts of the powerful theatrical experience that is available to adolescents. Chapman expresses distress at the possible perpetuation of clearly defined, specific “gender codes” (p. 127).

The notion of "female impersonators" is introduced by Mary Pipher in the same article to explain that "girls become 'female impersonators' in adolescence as they perform in ways that gain them love and acceptance by their peers" (p. 126). Chapman further supports her theory by citing the work of Bert O. States. States theorizes, "the actor is always in a state of double presence; that is her character is inseparable from her real body" (p. 126). In addition, Chapman examines with concern the roles available to females during their high school performing years. She looks at how young women are intertwined with their sexual and traditional female roles and questions the effect on their development. The case results in the formation of a defined presence. Theatre as an art form then can be questioned as providing the instant means to this desired end. In other words, can theatre in fact help women define who they are and want to be?

Chapman's critical question concerns what is appropriate for these high school productions that are becoming such an integral aspect of some individual development. The value of the performance experience is in conflict with the experience presented to impressionable young women. Theatre may have a lasting impact on their sense of self, knowing whether the experience instills traditional roles or empowers young women is crucial when dissecting the theatre experience and female development. This is not to say that drama is only a therapeutic way to develop the individual, rather, personal development is truly a significant side effect that occurs as students develop skills in cooperation and confidence through drama activities.

The next logical step in the inquiry was to investigate the women portrayed in feminist theatre texts like *Upstaging Big Daddy* (Donkin & Clement, 1993). Women were seen as strong and well-voiced because theatre provided a medium for their change and

growth. As women share their stories of pain and growth in *Feminist Theaters in the U.S.A* (1996) by Canning, insight into female development is gained. "Doing oral history involved telling stories about stories people tell about themselves. Method in this discipline should therefore attend to 'our' stories, 'their' stories, and the connections between them" (p. 19). In *Feminist Theaters in the U.S.A.*, Roberta Sklar states that "theater is interactive with the world, it does not exist separate from its audiences. [Feminist theater] was very much a reflection of the women's movement in this country and it still is" (p. 202). It is crucial then to investigate what the process of drama can reveal about the relationship between dramatic performance and female empowerment.

NOTEBOOK THREE – CONSTRUCTING THE SET: RESEARCH DESIGN

I will tell you something about stories, he said.

They aren't just entertainment.

Don't be fooled.

They are all we have, you see,

All we have to fight off illness

And death

You don't have anything

If you don't have

Stories

Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony*, 2000

Part A: Narrative Inquiry

The telling and re-telling of stories has been an excellent tool for researching and looking again at the context that the dramatic process provides. The study will begin with the gathering of women's stories centering on the dramatic process. Women with previous dramatic experience can begin sharing stories of their relational aspects of possible release of voice and empowerment through performing and the processes involved towards performing. The stories will be our foundation for further exploration of the dramatic process, but it is

essential that we begin to create a sense of ensemble through the storytelling and by reflecting on the storytelling.

Stories evoke participation, spoken or unspoken, they stay with us.

[There is an] inner and outer storytelling that plays a major role in our sleeping and waking lives. For we dream in narrative, daydream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticize, construct, gossip, learn, hate and love by narrative. (Taylor, 1996, p. 182)

Narrative inquiry invites lived experience within what is called a three-dimensional inquiry space (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The co-researchers, who have lived storied lives, use this three-dimensional space to look at their stories with an inward, outward, forward, and backward space in time and context. I think of it as meeting oneself in the past, present, and future. The following is one narrative experience that enabled me to journey backward in time as well as experience a sense of the present importance of creating the spaces for releasing voice in the context of drama.

Drama landscapes: high school

The old wood floor is stained with the paint of sets and scenes gone by. I watch as dust bunnies roll by chased by the sun that squeezes through the stage door from the adjoining room. I await my turn in the rehearsal, my chin pressed against the hardwood floor, my leg leaning against Sheldon's in that comfortable space that we have created on the stage. The murmur of the director as she gives notes to other actors is a soothing sound laced with the high school superiority that we know all that she has to say by our twelfth year—we don't need to listen, instead we lay and wait, in the comfort of each other, the comfort of having worked in this space for three

years together. The button of my blue jeans presses hard against my stomach as I lay on the floor, but the comfort of this time and this space overpowers any other thoughts and feeling that I may have. (Linette Smith, journal entry, February 15, 2003)

This sacred space is where I felt strong, connected to something important, special. The relationships seemed meaningful and endless and full of trust—that's what drama does: it creates those spaces where true feelings emerge. This place is home for me. I eat my meals here purchased at the 7-11. This is my extended family, all these actors and one teacher who has made us her family.

The landscape of the drama room or stage is a powerful element that will appear and reappear in my stories and, perhaps, in the stories of those who share a similar theatre experience. Landscape is a strong force in creating and remembering stories from our lives. The images that emerge in the imagination are powerful triggers for other stories or fragments of memory that may emerge to aid in the telling of a story. I am a visual learner, so when a descriptive picture of a place emerges through writing, it enables me to see—but also to feel—like I am part of that landscape. "Being there" is key in the telling of the story.

For my stories of drama experiences, the spaces where the stories took place are equally significant. The lighting, the smells, the room temperature: all of these elements play a role in the telling and in the remembering. The smell and sight of dust plays a large role in my memories of the theatre. It's funny, but when I enter a space that has a musty old smell to it, sometimes laced with the scent of mothballs, it pulls me back in time to our dressing rooms at Scona. The dust triggers my memory of the smell of old shoes from the costume drawer and the feel of the cool lino floor beneath my bare feet.

"Women must turn to one another for stories; they must share the stories of their lives and their hopes" (Heilbrun, 1988, p. 44). Narrative provides the means for people to name their own experiences. By sharing their stories the process of learning about the personal self is revealed to the writer or in the sharing of that writing with others. In the end, something speaks to us from that individual story. An element, a situation, or a relationship resonates with us and, even though it may not be our experience, we learn from it.

Story is a powerful medium in which to relive the vital and relevant aspects of personal growth. Storytelling for women is a powerful tool and, historically, has given power to groups or individuals who are able to tell or share their storied lives. Most people can recollect stories from the past, and they may notice the absence of women on the page or stage. Now that women have begun moving to centre stage, they also begin to grasp the power made available to them through the drama. We see the transformation of women from spectators into performers—from voiceless beings into those who project their voice.

Drama can often be seen as a means to tell stories; it provides the forum to display moments from people's lives. These stories can be on stage or in the classroom, but they are, nevertheless, a way to examine our own life and the lives of others. The stories are shared in theatre in order to portray and comprehend the value of that person's contribution to the world.

Throughout articles like *Giving Voice, Empowering the Powerless* (Gilpin, 1998), *Drama with an At-Risk High School Population* (Furman, 1997), or *A Dramatic Difference in Education in Chicago* (Mabry, 1997), the authors researched and shared stories of adolescents and, through this process, found ways in which adolescents found the strength to develop voice or identity. In *Giving Voice*, the students realize that finding voice is a difficult

process, yet critical to their growth. In this article Gilpin writes about "the responsibilities that go with self-empowerment and the empowerment of others; the difficulties involved in theatrical (or any other) collaboration; the growth, power, understanding, and also fear, that come with giving voice to those we have never listened to" (p. 9). It did not seem to be a simple or easy task to develop or share the voices of the students involved. It proved to be a difficult and gradual process to find and develop this sense of self, not only through life experience, but also through theatrical experience.

In drama, the activities are often student centred: The students become the resource of information and provide the tools with which to share. Brian Way, in his book *Development through Drama* (1967) writes on the insight and brilliance, as well as the difficulty of this student-in-the-centre focus. He states that every adolescent is confronted—sooner or later—by questions like "Who am I?" and "Where do I fit into life?" Only part of the self is involved in the question "What am I to do with my life?" Unfortunately, because the answer to the last question is the goal of education in its current form, finding the answer is practically the only aspect of development that teachers concern themselves with. But for each young person, it is only a segment of a larger whole, the fundamental essence of which is "Who am I?" (pp. 176–177). Way develops practical methods for a male or female student to question and begin to investigate his or her honest self, through imagination and role-play, during the dramatic process (p. 175). So even though it may be gradual and at times difficult, Way understood and also presented the inherent value of the dramatic process for students.

In Mary Pipher's book, *Reviving Ophelia* (1994), many young women find strength telling their stories through either a sharing or an analytical process. As they revisit their stories, they begin to understand themselves and their strengths. Through the pain, horror,

and discomfort of that which embodies their stories, they begin to reveal their true selves and find voice. Pipher states,

Girls who stay connected to their true selves are also confused and sometimes overwhelmed. But they have made some commitment to understanding their lives. They think about their experiences. They do not give up on trying to resolve contradictions and make connections between events; they may seek out a parent, teacher or therapist to help them. They may read or write in a journal. They will make many mistakes and misinterpret much of reality, but girls with true selves make a commitment to process and understand their experience. (p. 62)

The women in the study will have previous experience in a drama context, whether through school or community, and will also be drama educators by profession. Nevertheless, the work that Pipher has done is equally applicable to grown women as we come to terms with our lived experiences of the dramatic process. I believe that women will have the opportunity to discover their identity and to voice their "self" through the process of drama. The environment from which the process arises fosters risk-taking and sharing, but also provides the opportunity for developing personal identity while sharing and listening to personal stories. Drama can provide this opportunity: It has often been seen as a means to tell stories because it provides the forum to display moments from people's lives. These stories become staged for the theatre or the classroom, but are each an opportunity to examine life. The stories are shared theatrically in order to portray and comprehend the value of people's contributions to the world.

In a single human being there are many other beings, all with their own values, motives and devices. Some psychological technologies suggest we arrest these

beings, count them, name them, force them into harness till they shuffle along like vanquished slaves. But to do this would halt the dance of wildish lights in a woman's eyes; it would halt her heat lightening and arrest all throwing of sparks. Rather than corrupt her natural beauty, our work is to build for all these beings a wildish countryside wherein the artists among them can make, the lovers love, the healers heal. (*Women Who Run With the Wolves*, Estes, 1992).

The narrative process not only provides a distinct view of the world around me, but also within me. I have discovered a great deal about myself through the narrative process. I have questioned my strength, my honesty, my integrity, my morals, and my writing through the process presented in texts like *Narrative Inquiry* (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). I see things differently and appreciate much more, and I question who I am and why this method—way of life—that is called narrative is so essential to me.

I come from a family of storytellers, writers, and teachers. We are all drawn to each other's stories; I realize that these stories bond us together. The familiarity of "That story" or "Remember when?" provides such connection to the stories that my family and I have shared.

My grandmother, Vonda Smith, was infamous in our family for telling stories. She always had a story to tell. Her stories about being the first child born in Garneau or the amazing friendships she had or her fear of swimming were spelled out for us each time we visited Pigeon Lake. Grandma was the culmination of years of experience and a lifetime of stories, and she loved to write them down. Most of all, however, she liked to tell them and, even as she lay dying in her hospital bed, she had a story to share. I can still hear her melodious voice when I come across monuments or landmarks that she talked about in

stories. Every so often I will drive or run past her house in Windsor Park and recall the Sunday dinners where, through stories, I learned about my father's childhood and how my parents met and fell in love or how well my Aunt Toby performed in school.

My grandmother's stories were so important to her that she put pen to paper and wrote her memoirs and even her own eulogy, which I read at her funeral. The eulogy, difficult as it was to read, was a wonderful way of sharing her life from her perspective with those who loved her dearly. Through her stories she connected with people and we all felt that we knew her very well. Even the neighbours and her hairstylist felt that they knew her and were a part of her because she had shared the life stories with them, bringing them into her circle.

I want to share with you an excerpt from her memoirs so that you may have a glimpse of the stories that she loved to share with us.

There were a lot of privileges to be gained by living in Garneau, near the university, and for one thing we all felt very smug about the fact that our colours, green and gold, were the same as those of the university, besides which, the old wooden school on 84th Avenue did not have an auditorium, and we held our Christmas concerts in the Arts building auditorium.

The university always had a very good Drama and Musical Club, and they put on a lot of good plays, all of the Gilbert and Sullivan Operettas, and musical concerts which all of us enjoyed. Added to this were good plays put on in the old Empire Theatre on Whyte Avenue. I even saw Sarah Bernhardt in a play in which she played the part of a 17-year-old girl, when she was 82! I thought that was a bit thick!

Later, there was a very good actress in Edmonton named Verna Felton who had her own stock company, and we Wilsons went to see her and really enjoyed her plays! Then we had the Pantages, which dad thought was too risqué for us. So we didn't go there very often. (Vonda Smith, journal entry 1985).

As a young child I liked to hear the stories, but as an adult I cherished hearing them because this was the way I wanted to remember my Grandma. But the stories also provided me with a glimpse into how she became the woman that I knew. From her stories, I realized the significance to her of family and the strong female figures in the community who happen to come from the local theatre. I believe this thoughtful relationship with her idols or mentors enabled her to have a strong identity. Grandma was the kind of woman who, despite the times, would not disappear into the relationship; she would definitely have a voice in the household.

Reading narrative pieces like *Crossing Ocean Parkway* (1994), by Marianne De Marco Torgovnick, made me think of my own family quite a lot. I thought of where I came from and why this "looking back" was vital to my writing and research. Our background, our history "creeps" into what we are presently doing. Each day that I ponder about my study, I reflect on why I'm doing it, and I believe the reason relates directly to my past and those people in it.

As the middle child of an almost entirely female, lower-middle class household, I had plenty of stories to circulate: a number were ammunition against my sisters; others were fodder for alliance against my parents. Nevertheless, the stories, some of which we tell and retell each time we meet, are what carry us through difficult times and propel each of us forward on our own path in life. I think hearing and knowing their stories and the stories of

my dear women friends inspires me to want to write about women. These women have become strong and unique through the bonds they have with other women and the solace they get from telling their stories to these women.

There is such great power in telling and sharing. The secrets, the news, and the stories: When we can finally share them there is an experience of relief, elation, and connection with the receiver. This magical connection that I have with my sisters and friends has been such an integral aspect of my life. While writing this I recall the moment three years ago when I was diagnosed with cancer. The overwhelming feeling—of my very existence being questioned as I wondered “why me?”—an almost daily chant. With anger and disbelief, I questioned the notion of a woman who had always taken care of herself being given this black mark. But then, I received one of the greatest gifts: People from all over came to share their stories of survival and struggle with me. Through the telling, a sense of strength and hope emerged for me. The women in my life were the saving grace of my life. Stories of survivors came flooding towards me via these women. Some were complete strangers; however, through the sharing we became friends, acquaintances, sisters. My Gran even connected with a woman in the Bahamas who was living through the same cancer and brought her story to me. The act of sharing my story was a large part of the healing. Being able to tell of the life experience juxtaposed with the fear of death was empowering.

This was the starting point in my life. I began to realize the power of the story and the sharing of the story; these are also major components of my work in theatre. The two connect together beautifully. Theatre is telling stories. It is the sharing of a life. I think back a couple of weeks to Martha Henry's portrayal of Vivian Bearing in the play *W;t* (1995) by Margaret Edson. Her portrayal of a woman who realizes the import of living through dying is a means

of strength for me, even though the outcome is poor. A woman who is able to share her story with an audience, share her journey, her disasters, and her triumphs is encouraging and inspiring. The theatre is a place for this to happen and a place where women's lives can be re-created and reflected on the stage and, consequently, conversations can be created. The portrayals, followed by discussion, are part of the powerful, healing, and strengthening path of storytelling. After the performance, women wanted to talk about the story—to reflect there and then about the experience that was presented to them. This was actually available because the prologue to the play was a discussion about the journey for the performers, the director, and the audience. The production created a space for others to partake in the story.

This concept of creating a space for others has started appearing in my writing and my thinking about narrative. I know that creating space is entirely plausible because I have lived through the sharing and the resulting connections have given me the gifts of strength and perseverance. In *Crossing Ocean Parkway* (Torgovnick, 1994) and *A Book of One's Own* (Mallon, 1984), the phrase "We never cease to be ourselves" appears. This phrase jumped off the page at me each time I read it and it echoed in my thoughts. When it comes to narrative in theatre, this phrase gives me so much peace because I struggle with this whole concept of the honest and untapped self and how one might discover the honest self.

I believe that our true selves will emerge through the telling if we remember that we never lose that true part of ourselves and, as we connect to each other through our respective stories, a part of us that is unique and authentic is shared. I also realize that the person that I have become as a result of my family and our background will emerge somewhere in the writing, whether the person I have become emerges from a memory of performing in our local Brownie troupe in a community that was close knit and gossipy; from wanting to be

somebody because I saw people who were, to me, somebody; or from choosing to act because it was powerful and made me feel like someone who could stand up to my parents.

I realize there are many stories that come from my past. My personal makeup and the relationships that helped or hindered me along the way are all part of the stories that I share now, if only in a small way. In her article *Crossing Ocean Parkway* (1994), Torgovnick relates that infamous line that has been used in novels and movies: "You can take the girl out of Bensonhurst (that much is clear); but you may not be able to take Bensonhurst out of the girl" (p. 10). I grew up on the south side of Edmonton knowing that my roots began in the "low rentals" with a father in university and a mother working part time to feed three lively girls. This past history will always be part of me and is the reason I am where I am today. The strength that I have learned from my family, as well as all those qualities I wish not to partake in, are key to the creation of my identity. The past seems to always be with us in some way; whether elemental or fundamental, its presence is felt.

My family members are central in my life, and there are many positive things to be said about their influence on me. Like Torgovnick and many other writers, I worry about wanting to write of the darker moments because those moments are also a part of my narrative and my work as a woman in theatre. Part of the reason for acting and choosing theatre was to rebel against my father who said that acting was not a real job. So, as I begin to write my story and share my story with the women in the play, I question what I will share. Who will see the writing and how will it affect them and their relationship with me?

I think of Hedy Bach's struggle with this notion when her book and dissertation *A Visual Narrative, Concerning Curriculum, Girls, Photography Etc.* (1997) was published. When the book was published, the stories of her life were more accessible and, when

excerpts were published on the World Wide Web, even family in Europe could access them. Given that these relatives did not have all the details about her past until the release of the book and the posting on the website, her relationships with certain family members were altered. (Hedy did not know that the information would be posted on the website.)

There is a great level of anxiety when writing this way. What does one divulge and why? Who will have access? When writing, though, thinking of these things may alter the process. If we do not have the means to share the stories that impact us, aren't we then silencing and disenfranchising ourselves? Losing voice is one aspect I want to steer clear from. The voice is what I want to encourage in the work, and through the work. How do we create those spaces for ourselves where we can write about the past? In addition, how much of the past needs to be divulged in order for the story to create similar feelings in the receiver as in us? These will be ongoing questions for me as I write. I realize the foundation of my life is fundamentally important—cracks and all. Sharing my story, although difficult, might be necessary for connections to occur.

Michael Connelly and Jean Clandinin state in the article, "Stories of Experience and Narrative Inquiry" (1990),

The study of narrative, therefore, is the study of the ways humans experience the world. This general notion translates into the view that education is the construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories; teachers and learners are storytellers and characters in their own and other's stories. (p. 2)

The presence and use of story as the key to empowering women can be seen in the relevant articles and texts that were investigated during the literature review. The individuals

have been given the freedom and forum to investigate and to risk, based on the shared stories of those around them and the stories within them.

A future study using this method of narrative inquiry might also offer women a forum for discussion and growth. Carolyn G. Heilbrun in *Writing a Woman's Life* (1988) writes, "If one is not permitted to express anger or even to recognize it within oneself, one is by simple extension, refused both power and control" (p. 15). This is not to say that women have only stories of anger or repression to share, but the anger and consequently, lack of personal growth can be a result of not having the place or opportunity to articulate. "To denounce women for shrillness and stridency is another way of denying them a right to power. Unfortunately, power is something that women abjure once they perceive the great difference between the lives possible to men and to women" (p. 16). "Power is the ability to take one's place in whatever discourse is essential to action and the right to have one's part matter" (p. 18).

Subsequently, the act or process of drama can be either an activator or a means to begin this action of articulation for and in women. To have a presence, whether physical or vocal, on stage or while involved in the dramatic process, enables people to feel that they matter and that their contributions are essential and truly valuable to the whole. There are new stories waiting to be told; however, for women especially, not much has been investigated about how drama may offer a platform or medium for the discovery of self and strength of self (voice). In addition, some investigations into how characterization may be an enabler for discovery of various assertions that may emerge—specifically that of a person's honest voice—might be valuable and provide insight. Drama, as a process, asks people to look internally and share what they discover there. The internal findings posed

synonymously with external forces that surround the student are key to developing character. The practice of this growth through character development is highly powerful, because it also essentially becomes a tool for personal development and empowerment for women.

In the study, the gathering of stories provided the initial groundwork and the data to support the relationship between dramatic performance and female empowerment. ~~The~~ stories were collected first from the group of participants, then during one-to-one interviews. These stories were verified and approved by the participants and co-researchers for application to the study.

NOTEBOOK FOUR – THE PLAY: WORDS TO BE SHARED AND HEARD

Inspiration may be a form of superconsciousness, or perhaps of subconsciousness—I wouldn't know. But I am sure that it is the antithesis of self-consciousness.

Aaron Copland

Part B: Playbuilding – Through the Collective Process

Theatre is the place where the life of a society is shown in public to that society, where that society's assumptions are tested, its values scrutinized, its myths are validated and its traumas become emblems of its reality. Theatre is not about the reaction of one's sensibility to events external to itself, as poetry tends to be; or the private consumption of fantasy or a mediated social reality, as most novels tend to be. It is a public event, and it is about matters of public concern. . . . It is a place of recognition, of evaluation, of judgment. It shows the interaction of human beings and social forces. How could it remove itself from the other acts of recognition, evaluation and judgment known as politics? (John McGrath, *A Good Night Out*, p. 83).

Drama is the fabric of interpersonal existence, the interplay between each of us and others, and between all of us and the world and cosmos. It takes place within our individual selves as well. "Drama is a universal activity" (Kase-Polisini, 1985, p. 178). It comes in daily life, and can also be created theatrically, in a workshop exercise or a production.

The relevance of drama is multiplied when applying the collective process to the research, because it requires a group to work as an ensemble with multiple voices that are all integral to the process and the product. "Ensemble: At its simplest, a group of people that

works together regularly. At its best, a group of people who work well together, trust one another, and depend upon each other" (Rohd, 1998, p. 28). *Collective* is a term used to define the process by which a group of theatrical artists work together to create a work. The group may only include actors, or may include a director, a playwright, and designers. The process may begin as a community project in which the theatre artists interview participants in historical events or research the subject, returning to fashion—through song, anecdote, or scene—a finished work.

The process includes group building, confidence building, problem identification (and support), and analysis. The collective is open to all co-researchers in a non-judgmental, risk-taking but sensitive manner. Collectives challenge, evoke, and charge up the minds and bodies of those who participate as performers and researchers and those who choose to participate from the audience. Mark Wienberg writes in *Challenging the Hierarchy* (1992):

In a collective, task-specific messages between individuals are supplementary to communication with the whole or with what I have called the center, which is at once a repository of ideas, information, images and responses, and a source of new combinations and perceptions. It is the metaphorical locus of action and reaction, the developing group response free of reference to or ownership by individual contributors of any one part. Through it, each member has the potential for equal access to all information and, because leadership and status structures are de-emphasized, equal power to use his or her individual strengths on that information in the development of solutions to creative problems. (p. 11)

In a collective, group decisions are made by consensus: "the goal of this process is to find solutions that are not only acceptable to everyone, but also best for the individuals, the

group, and the product or production" (Weinberg, 1992, p. 13). In artistic terms, the process, regardless of the specific methodology of a particular group, is improvisational: ideas are more freely expressed and responses more immediate than in limited communication networks; each person is the voice of the group at the moment when she or he is speaking, and each idea is the province of the centre as soon as it is expressed. The sense is one of ensemble, of creative unit, and of freedom and expansion (p. 13).

The collective is formed by a facilitator. The facilitator does not act as director but instead provides leadership, creating situations conducive to the development of the group and themes for the group. The group itself has as much voice and influence as the facilitator has and can lead the process as well. "In becoming part-of-the-whole, we—leaders and players—dissolve personal resistance and interpersonal barriers in the moments when we are focused and mutually involved. In this way we facilitate the transformation to community rather than withhold against it" (Kase-Polisini, 1985, p. 189).

The collective building will be the second element in the study. The stories gathered in the early stages will be worked into various scenarios that represent the women's lived experience of the dramatic process. The collective process is twofold: (a) working towards a product to present to the public, and (b) working towards further data collection based on the performance and process of the collective. The collective production investigated the relationship between dramatic performance and female empowerment, and data were collected after the performance through the interview process (one to one and group), debriefing after the performance and journals kept during the collective building process.

The creation of something new is not accomplished by the intellect but by the play instinct acting from inner necessity. The creative mind plays with the objects it loves.

Carl Jung

The Play in the Play

I have been able to play again, really play. I have entered the catacombs of my imagination and found new friends and characters to converse and play with. This project has given me the opportunity to relocate my spirit and soar. "Play is an attitude, a spirit, a way of doing things" (Nachmanovitch, 1990, p. 43). The play was crucial to the process of building and maintaining an ensemble or collective feel for the group. Because of a small, all female cast, there was indeed room to play and grow as we challenged each other in our individual ways and with our unique gifts. My patience was tested often and my listening skills grew as I realized the women had so much to say—and say it they did in their own distinct and awesome ways.

In order to get to this stage of play we went through some phases of what Joe Norris (2000) refers to as *forming*, *norming*, *storming*, and *performing*; these were all essential phases in our collective development because we had to get a feel for each other's needs and contributions. At the end of our process together, we were particularly close to really sharing and performing together. This listening, sharing, and telling is fascinating to me because you have to be able to do all three in a collective ensemble. You also must trust yourself and others to let go, to give, and to take.

"Safe space: A working environment where participants feel comfortable playing and honestly sharing their thoughts and feelings" (Rohd, 1998, p. 5). To create a safe space is a

difficult yet crucial aspect of building a collective. The stick exercise, which became our metaphor for the process, was an integral aspect of this safe and trusting space. In order to feel safe one must feel that the space is open and receptive to them. The women in the cast were open, receptive, and forgiving. If you are willing to listen, you are willing to hear and be open to other ideas, other people. The skill of listening is key not only during the process of creating a collective, but also while sharing that collective with an audience. The days that we really listened to each other on stage were the days that we gave ourselves the ability to play on the stage—because we shared the stage. Likewise, the moments where groups really listened to the stories of the other women within the group, were the moments the women had a chance to be touched or disturbed or just simply awakened by what else is out there that affects us.

Our group was at its best because we did depend on each other and support each other. We became friends and sounding boards in our collective process and also in our personal process. We built friendships and life skills to carry us into the next stage of our development—whatever that may be.

There is always great excitement and motivation in working towards an end product, but, when this is the only focus, sometimes what is really essential is missed. Now, if people were asked why they enrolled in drama in the first place, a few of them would state, "I want to be an actor"; however, most of the time it is the sense of belonging or the sense of play that students are drawn towards. There is a realization that they can actually be themselves and express who they are or who they want to be. Tapping into the imagination and living through other characters becomes an essential aspect of their development. As a result of this

process, students find their voice because a group of people is willing to listen and willing to draw that voice out.

In dramatic arts, the voice is often equated with the personal development of the individual. As a person who lives in the centre of the dramatic process, there is a desire to see the process enable people to articulate their sense of self, strength, and existence in the world. Can we, through the art of drama and theatre, either revert back to this time of play and tap into memories or develop the foresight that is essential to nurture the development of expressive, articulate beings?

Actors need spaces where they can project themselves into hypothetical worlds created by their own sense of imagination. It seems crucial to provide these spaces with a director at the helm who can guide the actors through the process of rehearsing new ways of acting within the world. The rehearsal process would then enable the actors to safely experience the results or consequences of their new found actions and persone.

Directors who enable actors to name their worlds by sharing what they learn are enabling actors to "be noticed, be consulted" and are creating spaces where they can ask "Why?" (Howe, 1993, p. 11). All of these experiences become essential, as actors are involved with and develop within the dramatic process. The experience of sharing, risking, failing, and becoming are all essential to individual development, and this can be considered more valuable than the creation of a final production. I do not want to totally discredit productions, as I have directed my fair share. I think there is great value in actors working together towards a final goal. And there is also great joy in seeing actors succeed after months of preparation.

There is also joy in seeing the actors react to the audience when they hear the applause and, as a group, feel their success. But this can't be everything. The process to get there is just as vital, and we must begin to look at why we are getting there. It is one aspect of the triangulation that is so key to developing honest voice through theatre.

You can throw away the privilege of acting, but that would be such a shame. The tribe has elected you to tell its story. You are the shaman/healer, that's what the storyteller is, and I think it's important for actors to appreciate that. Too often actors think it's all about them, when in reality it's all about the audience being able to recognize themselves in you.

Ben Kingsley

Part C: Arts-Based Research

Arts-based research involves the expert self-knowledge of the lived experience and the stories of the participants. As Norris (2000) found

Much of what we do in process drama helps us to re-look at content to draw insights and make new meanings; this act can be considered a research tool. The entire play building process is not linear, but a spiral in which the stages of collection, analysis and dissemination overlap as each influences one another. In play building and rehearsal process we go through spirals of external research, personal exploration, discussion and dramatic exploration until we have collected a large number of ideas that are potential themes and scenes. (pp. 44 & 46)

The arts-based approach enables us to look at the collective process as an actual means of providing data. The initial work is the gathering of stories. As we disseminate the

stories through dramatic means—movement, monologue, scenarios, and so forth—we will analyze the progress made while using an arts-based approach. Once the stories are performed, further interviews based on the performance will be required, and data based on individual experience will need to be recorded.

Joe Norris (2000) explains that “a researcher not only collects data but also re-looks at the data from varying perspectives, making meaning from what is being examined” (p. 45). Drama becomes a complete research activity when data is collected, analyzed, and presented in dramatic fashion. Though this can be a valuable means to present data, much more is involved. Norris expresses his belief in the “more” based on his experience with the collective genre,

A cast gathers under my leadership to examine a topic/research question. Unlike the focus, there is no division between the researcher and informant roles as each participant sees him or herself as both. We begin by providing our own thoughts on the topic, telling stories of how we have experienced the phenomenon. The one thing we find is that stories beget stories as one triggers forgotten stories by other cast members. We find this a rich data collection activity, as individual interviews may not provide all those necessary triggers to collect such a wealth of stories. (pp. 45–46)

There are many arts-based techniques that can be used to elicit data from collaborative participants, including making a collage, painting an abstract representation of a feeling experienced, sculpting another’s body into the shape that best represents one’s understanding of the concept chosen, and using role play in acting out plausible situations. All are artistic modes of collecting data about a participant’s insights. The process drama activities of Needlands (1990), while focused on educational aims, can be adapted as a means

to collect data. Writing a letter home, creating a sound-scape of the rhythm of an experience, and writing a diary entry can provide alternative ways of allowing participants to articulate their insights. These are used in playbuilding.

At the same time as one is building a play, the role-playing of scenes could be considered simultaneous data collection and analysis. Role-playing mediates the original concept, permitting new and different perspectives to emerge through the act. This is a way in which the arts can play a valuable role in expanding qualitative research methodology. The act of translating content from one form to another can be considered an implicit form of analysis. Even if a performance is not envisioned, role-playing could be considered a useful data analysis technique used to uncover tacit beliefs (Norris, unpublished manuscript, 2001).

Norris (2000) explains, "This playbuilding method of research therefore uses arts based approaches in all stages of the research process. In a continuous spiral data is collected, analyzed and disseminated through dramatic means with each stage re-informing others" (p. 46). The play provides the means for self-exploration, initially at the gathering stage and then through dissemination to an audience. This second step provides another means of feedback for both the participant and audience. Next, the production of the collective provides concluding data when time has enable the participants to processed the production.

For the "Releasing Voice" study, the inquiry into the relationship between dramatic performance and female empowerment culminates with a public production, a debriefing group session and individual interviews to investigate stories further or to finalize them. Building a collective group, researching the process, and carrying out the production took a year—a lengthy and complex process. A platform was built on which to create stories and for

writing the script. The process continued with 30 workshops to change and expand the script; the final version was presented on April 28, 2005 at the University of Alberta.

During the rehearsal and workshop process, many techniques were used to garner information from the participants. Like a well-planned rehearsal, we followed a format each time. We discussed any new discoveries in our characters and in ourselves. These discussions were based on homework done: The homework consisted of defining the characters' objectives, tactics, environment, backgrounds, and overall motivation. Following the discussion we would rehearse a new section of the play and then take turns stepping out to view what we had created, thus following a more collective process than if entirely director centred.

Overall, I still remained the director on the project by assigning work for the next rehearsal, and providing acting notes at the conclusion of each rehearsal as well as an overall vision for the performance. The data was initially collected through stories of previous drama experience and through the arts-based techniques utilized in creating the collective. Finally there followed a postproduction data session that was emotionally moving, and that also reinforced so much of the work and the necessity of it in the world of theatre and education. It is crucial that these women have a presence—whether through body or voice—throughout the study. My hope is that their voices resonate and remain with the readers for years after they have read this.

The Play – L34:14 (a script for women)

The following production comes from a place of hope and a desire to share our stories of strength, courage, and growth. The words are a result of journaling, exploring, and discovering who we are and our new-found strength.

Three women circle a cool spot centred on stage—each stating lines from famous women's roles in the theatre.

Lily: I have always depended on the kindness of strangers.

Rosa: What's wrong with a drop of danger, Mr. Fagin?

Elle: You'll clean this dump 'til it shines like the top of the Chrysler Building.

Lily: Funerals are pretty compared to deaths.

Rosa: Do human beings ever realize life while they live it? Every, every minute.

Elle: Boy, I wish I had one of those guardian angel things like in that Debbie Reynolds movie.

Lily: And you and I, Uncle dear, shall behold a life, which is bright and beautiful and splendid.

Rosa: There's a daisy. I would give you some violets but they withered all when my father died.

Lily: I'd rather have a fool to make me merry, than experience to make me sad.

Rosa: Bernie you pop that gum one more time . . . and he did. So I took a large shotgun off the wall and fired two warning shots . . . into his head.

Elle: Out damned spot, out I say!

Lily: This is mere madness.

- Elle: I ain't done nothing wrong by speaking to the gentleman.
- Rosa: I kinda like it when you forget to give me presents. It makes me feel like we're married.
- Lily: I want to be left alone.
- Elle: To lose one parent, Mr. Worthing, may be regarded as misfortune; to lose both looks like carelessness.
- Rosa: I got scabby knees.
- Elle: You know that place between sleep and awake, the place where you can still remember dreaming? That's where I'll always love you, Peter Pan. That's where I'll be waiting.
- All: When shall we three meet again (in round)

Lights fade . . .

Into a hallway outside a theatre rehearsal space where Lily is pacing and wondering whether she should go into the space.

Lily: (to herself) It's too much. I don't know if . . . oh God why am I here?

Immediate flashback to Lily as a 6-year-old child.

Elle: (as the mother) Sweetie, why don't you talk to anyone at school? It's not good for you to be all alone.

Lily: Momma, I'm so scared of the looking.

Mom: The looking—what do you mean?

Lily: The scary kids, they look at me.

*Mom: Of course they look at you, they want to be your friend—you have to look back—
YOU HAVE TO SPEAK TO THEM SO THEY KNOW THAT YOU EXIST.*

*Lily: Speak, I might die . . . (this extends into a very adult scream)
DIEEEEEEEEEEE . . .*

The last scream has been heard by the two other women at the audition, Elle and Rosa.
(startled) They rush over to Lily who has collapsed on the floor.

Elle: What the hell?

Rosa: Are you alright, did someone hurt you?

Elle: She can't talk; she's fainted or something.

Rosa: I can see that. I'll go get someone.

Elle: Don't leave me alone with her. Don't you have a phone with you?

Rosa: I never bring my phone with me to an audition. I have this horrible habit of
forgetting to turn it off.

Elle: I totally understand . . .

They both stare at the body of the woman.

Elle: Maybe when they come to call us to audition we can let them know she's out
here.

Rosa: Maybe she'll come to by then; hey, is she still breathing?

Elle: (getting close to the body, hesitating, pulls out a mirror and holds it up to the
woman's nose) Foggy! Yep, she's breathing!

Rosa: Thank God, could you imagine finding a dead body, I mean at an audition! They
might just have to hire us.

- Elle: I wonder who she is. Should we check her purse or something?
- Rosa: I'd feel weird about that.
- Elle: You don't feel weird about this?
- Rosa: Well, yeah, but our purses are like our lives, ya know? You don't even want to know what I keep in mine.
- Elle: You're right, I don't. But come on, let's check hers—it's fallen right beside her here.
- Rosa: What if she comes to and thinks we're robbing her or something?!
- Elle: I'm sure she'd understand, wouldn't you?
- Rosa: No, I don't really trust anybody.
- Elle: No time like the present, come on.

The women snoop through the purse only to find a piece of paper.

- Elle: I wonder if this is an audition piece, I don't recognize it—it seems short. (she begins to read) "But . . .
- "But I will not submit to you and be put beneath you,
Like a serving maid.
He conquers me who dares to pay my price.
I ask too much, you say?
Yet I give all.
Why do you reject my love?
Watch out, you man, I warn you.
When I leave, you will fall asleep
And your rib will be taken out for your mate.

You banish me, but you will be cast out from the garden

And struggle to be reborn.

I will return to remind you of what you really want.

How you feel broken with a mate who is part of you,

Like a crutch."

Elle: Like a crutch.

Rosa: Holy shit, that's amazing. What play is it from; does it say?

Elle: All it says underneath it is "Lilith—a monologue."

Rosa: Strange.

Elle: You said it; hey, what if they come for us and they don't know where to find us?

Rosa: They know we're here; it'll be okay.

Elle: I just don't want to miss this opportunity.

Rosa: I don't think Lilith here does either.

Elle: I hope she's okay. I've never known anyone to be out this long. I'll go get someone.

Rosa: Oh, so it's okay for me to be alone out here with her?!

Elle: I checked for breathing. You stand guard and make sure she's okay; I'll be right back. (she exits.)

Rosa: (waits) This is too weird. (stares at the body). Maybe I'll work on my audition piece.

Under Milkwood

Dylan Thomas

Oh there's a face!

Where you get that hair from?

Got it from an old tom cat.

Give it back then, love

Oh there's a perm!

Where you get that nose from, Lilly?

Got it from my father, silly

You've got it on upside down!

Oh, there's a conk!

Look at your complexion!

Oh, no, *you* look.

Needs a bit of make-up

Needs a veil.

Oh, there's a glamour!

Lily: (mumbling) There's not much time, momma, brush my hair, I can't see myself in
the mirror.

Flash to Lily as a child.

Elle: (as the mother) Sweetie, mommy's doing her best to make you look nice. Now
keep still.

Lily: It doesn't matter momma. No one's going to notice me anyway.

Mom: Of course they will; you're so pretty and so smart. Who wouldn't notice you.

Lily: Everybody.

Mom: Pardon.

Lily: Everbo—

Mom: Lily speak up, I can't hear you.

Lily: Lilith.

Back to the audition.

Rosa: Lilith, your name is really Lilith? Hello, can you hear me? Hello! (she is right over the body now) Oh my God, what if she's in a coma or something. Help! Help! Did you hit your head, are you okay?—please—please—please be okay!

Elle: (rushing back in) No worries about them forgetting about us; I could hear you screaming from inside the theatre.

Rosa: She spoke! She sounded so young—I think she has head trauma—what are we going to do!

Elle: Not panic, that's what, please, for Christ's sake breathe! Now listen, I spoke to the stage manager and they've called for an ambulance. It'll be here soon.

Rosa: I can't believe we didn't think of that sooner. What if she's damaged, I mean her brain?

Elle: One less actor to compete with . . .

Rosa: Take that back, how can you say that?!

Elle: Oh my God, I was joking. Sorry, just trying to lighten things up I guess.

Rosa: Well that just made me feel sick okay!

Elle: I take it back—sorry—I get a really bad sense of humour when I'm nervous okay?!

Rosa: Okay.

Elle: You'll like this one actually—my first audition—God, I can still picture it. I walk into the Eden Theatre and the assistant director has on this really bad rug—you know, hair piece—and my mouth gets away on me and before I know it I'm like "Lose any actors in that nest 'cause I could sure use the part."

Rosa: You didn't.

Elle: I didn't get the part, that's for sure. I didn't even get to read that day—jerk!

Rosa: You can't really blame him.

Elle: It's his fault he thinks that he can get away with looking like that; Christ, if we have a single hair out of place we're screwed, ya know!

Rosa: I hear ya.

Elle: I always worry about the way they first see me, you know. I have to practice what I'm going to say to them—not so much the monologue, ya know—it's the conversational stuff that's hard.

Rosa: The acting part is easy.

Elle: It's my confident side—the character. I can be anyone else but myself and knock their socks off, but me—Elle—I worry that they're not going to like me.

Rosa: But it is you.

Elle: I know, I know, I just have to get used to it. I have to realize that I am enough. When a show is good, I take the audience home in my pocket, but when it's bad I hide under my bed for a week. I have to learn to separate the two and know that I work because I love the work. The work is me so I guess I should love me . . .

Lily starts to move her feet a bit.

Rosa: Shit!

Elle: Get a sense of humour woman!

Rosa: No, her feet just moved!

Elle: Maybe she's coming to?

Rosa: God I hope so—where's that ambulance.

Lily as a teen now makes the sound of a siren.

Rosa: *(as her singing teacher)* That's better, now let's try that with a bit of nasal sound.

Lily: *I don't know if this is improving things.*

Rosa: *Your voice is getting stronger, don't you feel it?*

Lily: *Yeah I guess, it's just, well . . .*

Rosa: *What is it?*

Lily: *These singing lessons, they're really great, you're really great, but if no one gets to hear me what's the use in doing it?*

Rosa: *What, you mean an audience?*

Lily: *I guess . . .*

Rosa: *You're not ready for an audience. We have much work to do. Let's focus, work on those Sirens . . .*

Back to reality.

Lily: . . . The Siren song of . . .

Elle: I think she heard us, she just said *siren*.

Rosa: I feel horrible for her. She obviously is really sick, but really wanted to be **HERE** today. God, do you love this that much?

Elle: The theatre? Of course, it's everything to me: my income, my identity, my social life, my social service (pointing to Lily).

Rosa: Not funny—AGAIN!—I love it too, but I wonder if I was feeling like **her** would I still show up for an audition?

Elle: How do you know what she feels like, we don't know what's wrong with her. We don't even know her!

Rosa: That's the problem; she can't tell us what's going on with her. It's so frustrating! God, to think that at one point in my life I was afraid to speak—shit—stuff like this really makes you think hard about who you are.

Elle: What do you mean you were afraid to speak?

Rosa: Oh, it was a long time ago.

Elle: We're thirty minutes behind on auditions and the ambulance isn't here yet so I think that we have the time.

Rosa: (quietly) There once was a time when I believed I didn't belong here. I wasn't interesting enough to be noticed. And I wouldn't attempt to be noticed. There was a time when I wouldn't speak up; I wouldn't try new things; I wouldn't believe in myself. I had dreams, but I wouldn't dare share them with anyone but my reflection.

The only time I felt I belonged was in front of my mirror. There I could be whoever I wanted to be. Whether it was the sweet ingénue, or the romantic hero, the villain or the clown . . . I played and played without being criticized. My reflection would never laugh at me—only with me—she would never whisper about me or turn her back on me. But that wasn't enough . . . I longed to have

someone reach out of the mirror and take me to a place where I belonged. I thought if I stared long enough, maybe—just maybe—my wish would come true. I spent a lot of time staring into that mirror . . .

Then, unexpectedly, at age eleven I found myself standing in the doorway of a large and intimidating drama room. I had no idea what to expect and, like many others, I thought I could simply blend into the background and coast through without making a noise. This is what I was good at. Of course, this was not the case . . .

"I couldn't hear you at all. Speak up, dear. That's what drama is about, right? I want to hear your voice, not just see your face up there."

And I learned to make noise. I didn't want to suffer the embarrassment of being singled out again, so I learned to speak up. And once I did, I discovered that being on stage was just like playing in front of my mirror. Only I got to play with other *real* people. Other people who loved to play as much as I did—who were just as quiet as I was until we stepped into that drama room. And suddenly I felt as if I belonged. I wouldn't shut up about it! I was so eager to learn more about this fascinating thing we call *theatre*. I loved discovering new things about myself and sharing them with my family.

Throughout the three years of junior high school I went from a timid, insecure, and literally speechless girl to one who wasn't yet completely secure but who at least believed in herself enough to let her voice be heard. I still had a lot of insecurities to deal with, but I found a way of releasing some of those emotions

through theatre. There was a significant change in me and I owe it all to that large and *wonderful* drama room. I just had to take those first few steps.

Elle: You didn't feel like you could speak?

Rosa: Yeah, scary huh?

Elle: I wonder if she feels like that? (pointing to Lily)

Rosa: Her name is Lilith by the way.

Elle: How do you . . . never mind, it'll just make it weirder. With a name like that you'd think she'd be stronger. What do you think is wrong with her? Nerves?

Rosa: Who knows. We all get so worked up about your auditions; the show part is easy. Like you said, it's making them believe that you deserve to be in the show that's hard. So maybe that's why she's like this.

Elle: I'm glad that I'm strong enough to make it through the door without passing out—we have to have a hidden strength not to pass judgment on ourselves in the first place.

Flashback to Lily in high school.

Lily: My voice is stuck in my throat; it's actually lodged there and maybe if I had a crowbar I could set it free. I need to be stronger! Maybe if I had a crowbar I could set this teacher free—ha-ha. She's trying to pry my voice out of me but instead pushes it back further and further—it hurts now—the monster is pressing down on me. Am I supposed to know what every word means? Is this what school is for? To find the meaning of every freakin' word! Why can't she let me do this on my own time—I'll find my voice won't I?

Reality.

Lily: Won't I? (still unconscious)

Elle: Won't you what? What is it Lilith? Speak to us, it's okay.

The women have rushed over to the body.

Rosa: This is scary, there's so much she wants to say.

Elle: I guess that's why she's an actor. (pause) I know, not funny.

Rosa: Actually, more truth than humour in that statement.

Elle: What do you mean?

Rosa: We all want to be seen AND heard on some level or we wouldn't put ourselves through this torture of rejection every time we show up.

Elle: Of course, I have an ego that needs constant battering or else I wouldn't be here.
What was I thinking . . .

Rosa: But that's all part of it, it helps us be who we want to be.

Elle: Yeah, the year I played Ophelia, Blanch Dubois, a wood nymph, Santa's helper at the mall, and tried out for an all male cast of Chicago I really knew who I was.

Rosa: But you did, didn't you?

Elle: As crazy as you are and as this sounds, yes—the gigs have helped define me. In a scary way I knew back in grade school that the roles were shaping who I was. It was like grade seven. What a horrible time—hormones, boys, bitchy friends, boys, trying to be as smart as my older sister, more boys. Well, my first big role was as Miss Hannigan in *Annie*—what a bitch that woman is—well anyway, I cursed, I bellowed—in my mother's high heeled shoes—and I had the time of my

life. I never felt so important as at that moment. I felt powerful with all of that focus on me and when I walked down the hall that week my head was higher and fuck did my feet hurt—damn shoes—but yeah, I carry a little bit of strength from each of those moments that's for sure. Maybe Miss Lilith will find her way here .

Rosa: What do you think will happen to her?

Elle: I think that she will wake up, march into the audition, and take the role from us!

Rosa: Not . . .

Elle: Funny, I know, but don't you hope that Life gets better than this for her?

Rosa: Totally, I . . .

Voice: Next!

Elle: It's my turn, what do we do?

Rosa: You left me with her before and I survived. Maybe when you and your bad sense of humour leave she'll feel safe enough to come to.

Elle: (reaching for pocket mirror that was left by the body) I don't always like what I see in the mirror, but it's time to start (leaves mirror) The audience usually loves me—see yeah—break a leg.

Rosa: You too.

Elle: No, really break a leg so I get the part. You can't be Puck with crutches—could you imagine? (limping). If we shadows have offended think but this and all is mended.

Rosa: Go, be free . . . flights of angels and all that crap.

Rosa is now alone with Lily and decides to practice her audition piece . . .

Rosa: Rosa Williams and I will be presenting Lilly Smalls from "Under Milkwood."

Oh there's a face!

Where you get that hair from?

Got it from an old tom cat.

Give it back then, love

Oh there's a perm!

Where you get that nose from, Lilly?

Got it from my father, silly

You've got it on upside down!

Oh, there's a conk!

Look at your complexion!

Oh, no, *you* look.

Needs a bit of make-up

Needs a veil.

Oh, there's a glamour!

Where you get that smile, Lil?

Never you mind, girl

Nobody loves you

That's what you think.

Who is it loves you?

Shan't tell.

Come on Lilly.

Cross your heart, then?

Cross my heart.

Please wake up, where's that ambulance. God!

Voice: Next!

Rosa: I can't leave you, but it's time for me to go; I've waited my whole life for this moment and I can't let it pass me by. I promise I'll come right back after the audition, don't move—God now I sound like Elle. (limping) "If we shadows have offended . . ."

Rosa exits towards the audition location.

Pause.

Lily: (quick gasp and sits up) Move! Oh God. (feels around for her paper; picks up mirror from beside her) It's you, where have you been for so long? Lost in a garden—there is no Eden you know—somehow I feel that you were not alone today and you look stronger . . .

Lily gets up and walks towards the audition location as the lights fade.

Only when he no longer knows what he is doing does the painter do good things.

Edgar Degas

NOTEBOOK FOUR: *IN THE GREEN ROOM*—SOMETHING TO TALK ABOUT

Epilogue

When people ponder the actual act of dramatic performance as a medium for research, they are compelled to acknowledge the power and presence that this art form has within the world. The notion of empowerment through performance can be addressed by using dramatic performance to research an area of interest, importance, or that is relevant to an individual's growth. Saldana (1998) writes that "qualitative research is contextual, and so are its methods of representation and modes of presentation" (p. 182). In this case, dramatic performance can provide the context to revisit, review and research data. Theatrical performances, which are entirely representational, are a powerful, but nonetheless controversial, method of disseminating data. In his article "Data as Drama: Reflection on the Use of Reader's Theatre as a Mode of Qualitative Data Display," Donmoyer (1995) refers to the "epic" theatre of Brecht (1992) when supporting the use of performance as an evolutionary form of researching and relaying data. "Brecht intentionally created theatre that was presentational in character, for he believed theater should be the antithesis of escapism. Rather than providing escape from the problems of the world, theater should be a call to analysis and action" (p. 407).

When works are written to be shared, authors hope that at least one person will understand them and their words; however, I never expected such a favourable response to the production of "L 34:14." The production was followed by a discussion with the audience and actors; many valuable questions were posed about the theatre experience and the

preparatory work going into the piece. In addition, the actors and I met the week following the show and had a great cry about our work and how it touched lives. As artists, we were not only thrilled, but also inspired that the work would carry on through the stories others would tell about their experience with "L34:14." It made us all stronger and more thoughtful.

The questions posed at the production allowed us to further connect with the audience and know that the work would continue on. For example, the question about the symbolism of the mirror was an excellent catalyst for discussion. From our perspective, the mirror symbolized the image of Lilith as she appears in present-day folklore, and also represented the way we constantly judge ourselves and our image. The answer to the question touched me: The actor playing Lilith had the opportunity to say that, when she closes the mirror at the end of the show, it is "symbolic of closing that part of her life where she is still judging herself." This relationship, set up by the audience member, confirmed that the production process was a valuable tool for the study.

The production concept allowed for the creation of a new space for dialogue and personal growth. The entire process—from the page to the stage—provided the group with a forum for their stories and a platform on which to tell them. The experience was very positive for all those involved.

It was awesome; it felt really, really good. To be in a room with people who are soaking in every ounce of your being was wonderful. A small space filled with people that were there for you. I was nervous as hell but it was so cool. It was an awesome experience such a show of the work. It was like it felt more important than other shows because it was for something; many shows are for art but this was for more than that. It was that much more important. It was nice to have males in the audience

hearing our words, as well as women. It was good to have the laughter; it was neat to have the audience there; it made me feel that I was acting and not being myself; it was more comforting. (Rosa, debriefing the play, May 1, 2005)

As we knew it would, the audience became an integral factor in the process. We all had the opportunity for growth because we were challenged to speak in front of an audience made up of friends, family, theatre professionals, drama students, and anyone brave enough to walk in off the street.

I learned a lot; we really communicated with the audience as I had a great time doing this project. It was like a group of sisters on stage. I really liked how well we worked together. I wish that more people could experience what we experienced. What hit me the most was the comment about the "natural" characters that were present in the play and the question about the ability to do that and it made me feel like we put something believable out there in the universe. I wish we could do it more than once. There can be such fear in playing on the stage, but knowing that you are playing some part of you is comforting. I really liked playing in front of the audience. (Lily, debriefing the play, May 1, 2005)

Debriefing was crucial for the actors. This step should be part of any production that demands change in the actors, director, and audience. For those individuals involved in the collective theatre process, debriefing sessions are always included; but when theatre is being used for education, community action, or awareness, this element should also be included. In our case, the post-rehearsal debriefing informed some of the play text, and the postproduction debriefing aided in informing us of the changes that occurred. The changes were quite

powerful: We realized that something was actually said and that the audience not only listened, but also responded, which provided further insight for our growth.

There was so much that resonated with me. It was cool to act. Better still was the massive amount of support I got from the women involved in the study. I may not have made it through the process without their honesty and hard work from the start of the pre-show rehearsals. Throughout the entire process, the group felt really comfortable. We never worried about hurting each other's feelings and we felt we could share in the responsibility of the work, because it was a collective effort. Then the response to the show was amazing. During Rosa's monologue, I could feel the audience listening. I should have been in full character but the "push" from the audience was powerful because they were listening to something so important. This was then followed by the valuable questions and comments about the moments that resonated with the audience. Based on the discussions, examples from the play that resonated with the audience include the mirror property for Lilith, the scarves representing our ages and experience in life, and the basis for naming Lilith. Many of these concepts were picked up by those watching and listening, and the audience challenged us by asking about the concepts which, in turn, made us realize that they were "with us"!

The process also reminded us that we're always inside of who we are playing and, to answer and recognize this, we must never forget that we are doing this for an audience and there is a relationship that is present when performing a piece of live theatre. This relationship can't be realized until all the players are involved. It starts when actors begin to care about what they will do in front of the audience in order to build their relationship with that audience. We also discovered that you have to care about the character that you are playing AND the characters you are playing with in order to deliver that story to them. This

piece of theatre was built with great care for the script and the people who would be speaking those words. They gave their voices to the characters, who then turned their voices to the audience to be heard, to be understood, and to be believed.

The theatre has great power and great presence in our society and, through this medium, there is a life force and strength that can be shared. There has been a request from an Edmonton high school to use the script for a one-act process centred on women and women's growth. This showed me that the work is not just needed, but that the world is ready to play with these words and explore the theatrical world of women.

To empower women is to create spaces and processes where they can take risks and discover who they are as authentic human beings—and the theatre is a wonderful, playful arena to "rehearse" this in. This labour of love was a risk, a journey and a huge learning experience that I will cherish. Heilbrun (1988) wrote

There are four ways to write a woman's life: the woman herself may tell it, in what she chooses to call an autobiography; she may tell it in what she chooses to call fiction; a biographer, woman or man, may write the woman's life in what is called a biography; or the woman may write her own life in advance of living it, unconsciously, and without recognizing or naming the process. (p. 12)

Through this collective process we were able to name the process and, in addition, discover much about ourselves and create future paths for women to take at their own risk. The art imitated life and thus made it richer for those involved right through to the end. In our lives we are touched by those who change us, and theatre is about change. Whether we watch it or are a part of the cast presenting the story, we are somehow changed when the

curtain drops. It is what we decide to do with that changed persona that is the key to building who we are in this dynamic world. Gilligan (1982) writes,

To have a voice is to be human. To have something to say is to be a person. But speaking depends on listening and being heard; it is an intensely relational act. By voice I mean something like what people mean when they speak of the core of the self. Voice is natural and also cultural. It is composed of breath and sound, words, rhythm, and language and voice is a powerful psychological instrument and channel, connecting inner and outer worlds. (p. xvi).

The worlds may collide or, as in our case, synchronize on such a level that a story may be told, heard, and somehow carried into history for others to learn from, cherish, or let go of because there is no longer a need to hold on.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Beales, J. & Zemel, B. (1990). The effects of high school drama on social maturity. *The School Counsellor*. 38(1), 46-51.

Beales and Zemels' article is a demonstration of a study to "examine the effect participation in a high school drama program has upon the social maturity of high school students relative to their peers who were not enrolled in a drama program" (p. 46). The question in the article follows: "Is there a significant difference between drama and non-drama students in regard to their pretest and posttest self esteem self-esteem scores as measured by the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale?" (p. 46).

The article describes in scientific detail the study of students attending high school in southeastern British Columbia. Drama and art students—20 of each—were chosen as the experimental and control groups (p. 47). Students in grades 9 and 10 who had not previously studied art or drama, participated in pretest CPI and Rosenberg Self-Esteem scales and were again looked at 6 months later. The authors explain that the posttest was put through a "one-tailed *t* test to discover if there was a significantly greater ($p < .05$) increase in social maturity and self-esteem in the experimental groups compared with the control group" (pp. 48-49). The authors clearly disseminate their finding and any implications of the study through this article. The CPI indicated that significant improvements were noted for drama students in the areas of social presence, tolerance, and achievement via independence (p. 50).

Using hypothetical situations, the researchers also discovered and asserted that drama may be of significant assistance to students as a means to analyze certain situations for understanding and clarification. Finding that drama may enable the student to project with confidence his or her ideas within a class, or may hypothetically place the student in a situation where they can investigate that situation without consequence or downfall. Though the article applies mainly to

schools, the authors ask the readers to look at the broader picture of drama as the "development of the social person" (p. 51); through drama, schools and students may learn to be more sensitive to "others and their beliefs . . . as drama can be a potential instrument in the affective maturation of young people" (p. 51).

Boal, A. (1979). *Theatre of the Oppressed* (pp. 120-150). New York: Urizen Books.

In the section entitled "Poetics of the Oppressed," Boal gives insight into the workings of his style of theatre. He presents forum and invisible theatre styles, and the joker (facilitator) role. His main objective in this work is to change people (p. 122). He explains in fine detail that "spectators can become actors, transformers of the dramatic action" (p. 122). Through personal accounts offered by people who were a part of his revolutionary theatre work (pp. 123-124), Boal shares the immense power of the theatre process on individuals.

We are then privy to his plan of action for transforming the spectator into actor: four stages are presented with examples of each. The four stages are "knowing the body, making the body expressive, the theater as language, and the theatre as discourse" (p. 126). Boal explains these stages and shares practical exercises and examples of how each stage can be achieved for the actor. Following this is a list with detailed explanations of disjunctive exercises that enable actors to analyze themselves and raise their level of consciousness (p. 128).

The really fascinating aspect of the chapter is the section on Boal's forum theatre. He explains, "In forum theatre no idea is imposed: the audience, the people, have the opportunity to try out all their ideas, to rehearse all the possibilities, and to verify them in practice, that is, in theatrical practice" (p. 141).

Boal also inspires thought through his discussion of "breaking of repression" (p. 149). He states that "the dominant classes crush the dominant ones through repression; the old crush the young through repression; certain races subjugate certain others through repression. Never through a cordial understanding, through

an honest interchange of ideas, through criticism and autocriticism" (p. 149), as this is established to break the repression as a participant remembers a particular moment when they felt repressed, accept it and begin to act in a manner contrary to their own desires (p. 150). As the person shares the story of repression, they also witness it re-enacted by chosen participants in the group. Once played through in its original state it is then played a second time, this time with the protagonist not accepting the repression. "The process to be realized, during the actual performance or afterward during the discussion, is one that ascends from the phenomenon toward the law; from the phenomenon presented in the plot toward social laws that govern those phenomena" (p. 150). The participants gain a new understanding of their work and themselves through this process.

The text is quite interesting, but choppy at times, likely because it is translated from Spanish. Nevertheless, Boal presents a fiery approach to theatre for changing the world and those who inhabit it.

Brown, K. & Gillespie, D. (1997). We become brave by doing brave acts: Teaching moral courage through the Theatre of the Oppressed. *Literature and Medicine*. 16(1), 108-120.

"Theatre of the Oppressed"—a particular form of improvisational theatre—in a bioethics class taught to graduate students in occupational therapy (p. 1). The article extensively covers the philosophies of Paulo Freire and Augusto Boal in terms of finding the voice of the oppressed through a sense of empowerment. Freire advocates "liberation pedagogies that aim to empower students" (p. 2). Boal, in turn, uses the art of theatre to emphasize aspects of the oppressive relationship and the joker (facilitator) to encourage what he calls "spec-actor" participation (a discussion between actor and audience, and vice versa) (p. 2). The role of the joker as facilitator is described as a crucial connection between audience and actor. The facilitator warms up the audience and bridges the gap between the two groups in order to foster discussion.

The authors, after setting up their premise, discuss how this system of theatre can have operative relevance for health care ethics. The authors describe the U.S. health care system as a business model (p. 3). This model has a direct affect on the less than friendly relations with patients and health care professionals. "Inequalities, bureaucracies, power relations, etc. have led to critical perspectives being ignored or devalued, and certain voices rendered silent—often creating the experience of moral distress". (p. 3).

The article aptly illustrates the use of Boalian techniques in the authors' health care class. The authors describe two, 2-hour sessions on "moral courage" for students who had experience in clinical settings and were feeling threatened by the current clinical environment (p. 4). Through their description, the writers provide great detail about scenarios based on the following: "an administrative directive threatens quality of care and/or staff morale" (p. 5). These scenarios are scripted and acted by the students. The scene, chosen by the students, is described in the article as being played again and again with multiple perspectives as people took turns playing each role and were given the chance to restructure the direction of ideas like the "lay-off policy" (p. 5). The authors then follow the reenactments with a section on the discussion of feelings and experiences resulting from the scenarios.

The article is a superb example of how Boal's forum theatre provides creative opportunities for students and teachers to invent situations and project ideas that will, in turn, strengthen personal expression and moral courage in today's health care environment.

Burgoyne, S. & Poulin, K. (1999). The impact of acting on student actors: Boundary blurring, growth, and emotional distress. *Theatre Topics*. 9(2), 157-179.

This very intriguing and informative article presents findings from a grounded theory study dealing with the "blurring boundaries between actor and character" (p. 1). As well, the study investigates whether the experience leads to growth or

emotional distress. The methodology implemented through the study was "grounded dimensional analysis," which was utilized to investigate subjective experience and to "generate theory about a complex phenomenon from the point of view of the participants" (p. 1).

The study included 15 student actors with varying levels of experience and training who were to be interviewed based on questions about whether or not their acting experiences have had "significant impact on their lives and if so, what the impact may have been" (p. 2). The authors found that there is a relationship between acting and life experience.

The article looks at certain acting strategies that actors draw upon to flesh out their characters. The "inside-out approach discussed in the article was seen as a significant condition for what respondents described as a blurring of the boundaries between themselves and their art, between self and character" (p. 4). The authors discovered through their study that roles could affect actors' personal lives in both negative and positive ways.

We are presented with an interesting discussion and in-depth look at the positive consequences that occur through character development and the affect on personal lives. The growth that can occur in the individual as an actor who portrays another life or investigates another person far removed from him or her is remarkable. The authors share with the reader some thought-provoking student insights to support this process. The authors argue that the drama process can "cultivate skills in relating to others, understanding people, etc" (p. 3).

The authors also investigate the rather negative but highly likely impact that this type of study can have on the individual. Examples include "weaving the character's life into one's own so that the two are inseparable, and actors finding themselves out of control in the persona" (p. 5). Yet, there is a powerful impression that there is significance to be found in the exercise of role-play and the portrayals

for the individual. This significance can also be seen carried into the actor's personal life as the actor "develops strategies to separate the two worlds" (p. 6).

Strategies of contracting, grounding, and noting discrepancies between the self and the character are mentioned. Nevertheless, the article aptly demonstrates how empowering and enlightening acting can be for individuals in their approach to the world. The "blurring of boundaries" enables actors to view the world differently and with a new approach because of their new-found knowledge, which then enables the actor to have a heightened awareness.

Donald, a senior theatre major, told of experiencing a paradigm shift, as a result of playing a homosexual character. Having grown up in a conservative small town, Donald described himself as "close-minded," though not homophobic, prior to playing the role. His experiences in preparing for the role enabled him to "destroy all these constructs I had been growing up with" and to empathize with anybody who is different. (p. 4)

Throughout the article, the authors demonstrated the immense emotional change and struggle actors experience when preparing for a role. At times, the experience can have a negative impact on student actors as they may not be psychologically prepared; however, the article juxtaposes this with examples of when student actors gained knowledge and empowerment.

The article presents relatively undisguised and undisclosed topics in theatre and drama education; this is termed *boundary blurring* (p. 1). The study presented involves optimizing the "impact of blurring through increasing the actor's awareness of how the life/theatre feedback loop operates, thus giving her more control and enabling her to make choices" (p. 6).

Canning, C. (1996). *Feminist theaters in the U.S.A.: Staging women's experience* (pp. 10-20). New York: Routledge.

I had never been in a room with three hundred women before and it was the most exhilarating experience My first experience of it was total disorientation—okay, where's the focus? Where's the great man? Where do you look? And in two seconds, it all happens really fast, I was thrown back into myself. (p. 11)

This type of emotionally charged testimony is the central theme in the chapter titled "Writing the History of Feminist Theater Groups." This chapter, an interesting and useful addition to the literature review, looks initially at the crude beginnings of feminist theatre in the United States. Though crude, the early years (1970s) provided insight into the female experience as Canning explains that women's stories provided events and ideas for scenarios (p. 13).

The chapter also aligns the women's movement with this theatrical movement and Canning says "women historians and women theater practitioners responded similarly by seeking to combine their feminist politics with their work" (p. 14). Yet, findings were such that "the very act of focusing on women and asking them 'to speak for themselves', is a challenge to traditional male-centered history" (p. 18). Women were described as scrutinizing themselves within the world shaped by men and wanting to have the ability and space to tell their stories. Canning goes on to explain that, through her study to understand the foundations for feminist theatre, she conducted interviews of women present at the beginning and those who were affected by the entire process. Women shared their narrative stories with her, which for Canning resulted in "a tapestry marked by contradictions, loyalties, and disagreements" (p. 20). She realizes that she is unable to write a seamless, traditional history of feminist theater because her interpretation of it and her need to resolve the contradictions that occur in it would get in the way.

The chapter provides a thorough introduction into the study of feminist theatre, and the remainder of the book, at a quick glance, provides personal struggles in the formation of this phenomenon called feminist theatre.

Clandinin, J. & Connelly, M. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher*. 19(5), 2-14.

In this well-thought-out and well-designed article, Connelly and Clandinin share their insight and personal experience into the research method called *narrative inquiry*. The authors present an excellent argument for the use of this approach in research and provide strong support from a sociological and anthropological context. The article is well supported with ways to conduct this method of research (pp. 5-6).

Most prominent is the immense detail provided, along with a true sense of how relevant and useful narrative inquiry can be to a researcher dealing with human subjects. "The central task is evident when it is grasped that people are both living their stories in an ongoing experimental text and telling their stories in words as they reflect upon life and explain themselves to others" (p. 4). The structuring and writing of the narrative is also important when shared by the authors; when done properly, one does not feel lost in minutia but always has a sense of the whole (p. 7).

Connelly and Clandinin explain that time is of the essence: not merely time spent on the stories of others, but also moving backward and forward in "storied time" (p. 7). The fact that people's stories are valuable and need to be told is another positive aspect of the article and, as a result, the authors take time and space to write how the narrative methodology can be risky and dangerous, and abused by those who choose to use it—whether through deception or misuse.

Overall, the article is well written and thoroughly useful. The authors are able to relay findings and describe how to carry out this research.

Courtney, R. (1988). *Re-cognizing. Selected writings on drama and education* (pp. 124-144). Ontario: Pembroke Publishers Limited.

In the focus chapter, Richard Courtney explains with ease and thoroughness that theatre can reflect "not merely natural life but also social life" (p. 124). Courtney takes three complementary perspectives: first of "an actor and director in the theatre; second of a teacher from preschoolers to Ph.D's; and third, from direct participation in and observation of ritual drama of all kinds" (p. 125).

The chapter opens with his first investigation and the author discusses mediation and the notion that drama action is the generic form of human mediation (p. 125). Courtney addresses his topic metaphorically, stating that "inner is given meaning from the outer" (p. 125). "When we put ourselves in someone else's shoes we understand the other through the self and the self through the other" (p. 126). He explains that the outer and inner meanings are amplified through the understanding of another person's experience or existence, and drama can be the means for this to occur. His argument for this is presented as a lesson or discussion of symbols through dramatic action, and he discusses how individuals receive the metaphoric or symbolic message and are embodied by the theatrical elements.

The symbolic power of dramatic action lies in its ability to effectively construct world-views. It creates ideas of "the way things are." At least partially, it legitimizes the cultural order. But it can, simultaneously, provide symbolic models to change this order. (p. 138)

Courtney continues his study with examples of mediation through media investigation, personal experience, social drama (in terms of social existence of space and time, and the role played), and cultural drama (narrowing the gap between cultures) (pp. 127-141). The chapter provides a thorough study of this process of mediation through dramatic action. Courtney articulates very well his thoughts on mediation which he believes "links the individual and society, the person and the culture and the coupling of two to each other" (p. 142).

Courtney also presents his ideas of culture and aesthetic, and the relationship between the two that occurs in humans engaged in drama activity. Courtney

believes that where learning transforms the organism within experience, the aesthetic qualities of this change are intrinsic, intuitive and performative (p. 130).

Courtney also astutely addresses Martin Buber's notion of "I and Thou" and how personal understanding is given by putting oneself in someone else's shoes, and social understanding is provided through mutual inter-action occurs (p. 132). He looks at how human action varies between cultures and how, in social drama, two actors may "improvise, perform and hypothesize and produce cultural dialogues" (p. 135) which then brings tolerance and understanding to the situation.

As he reveals more about his investigations, Courtney questions if notions of acknowledging expressions of cultures are valuable and significant or are to be extrapolated to all cultures. As a result, a lengthy section of the chapter is dedicated to what Courtney calls *ritual performance* (pp. 137-139). He states that ritual is a significant element within social drama and is closely linked to all the issues raised previously in the chapter (mediation, understanding the self through the other, and so on) (p. 137). He notes: "Actors in both ritual or theatre break with the actual and the mundane; they emphasize the functional which assumes the appearance of a heightened reality" (p. 137). He describes that ritual actors create the cultural worlds in which they perform. The symbolic power inherent in their dramatizations affects all kinds of social and cultural performance, and learning is consequently changed by messages embedded in metaphors, symbols, and the structural patterns employed by the teachers and students in the schools (p. 142).

Courtney views people as the "shape changers" of theatre (p. 141). Throughout the chapter, he argues how the elements of theatre affect meaning and how what is communicated to each actor and the audience affects this meaning. He has thoroughly investigated hermeneutics in social performance. He describes how actors work through rough patterns and codes to find and understand meaning, and work through their performance to "gain knowledge in a tacit way through the here and now" (p. 143).

Courtney concludes, "dramatic knowledge is gained not through detachment but through an actual, practical, and bodily involvement within the performance" (p. 144). The chapter is a great example of the power theatre has to change or alter thinking or actions.

Donkin, E. & Clement, S. (Eds.). (1993). *Upstaging big daddy. Directing theatre as if gender and race matter* (pp. 309–316). Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

In this highly evocative and political chapter titled "All Ears, To Let My Ideas Transform," Len Berkman talks with feminist director, Amy Gonzalez, about her experience in the theatre. The reader is introduced to Gonzalez's background in theatre, which is extensive and includes many feminist and non-feminist works. The discourse becomes intriguing as Gonzalez describes her journeys to Berkman. They discuss her work on a play, which consisted of an all-female cast. As a result of the lack of "male gaze," there was a sense of comfort and an air of non-judgment. Berkman asks if Gonzalez deliberately shapes her theatre pieces as a result of her beliefs in feminism. The response is enlightening: She explains that she selects people based on common ground and a common way of working—so, in a sense, yes, the shaping occurs (p. 310).

Gonzalez shares interesting personal stories of when she had difficulty trusting herself and her decisions because of her inexperience—compared to others or due to her cultural background and gender. She quite eloquently describes her transformations because of theatrical experiences. One question relates to gender-consciousness; she replies with the following:

At the time it was not an issue. Not until graduate school in 79'. The climax of that discovery was that I directed *Dusa, Fish*. Fish kills herself in the end, you know, because she can't reconcile two parts of herself, because she lives in a place that will not allow her to be a full person. I felt that was very truthful, and sad, of course, but affirming. I myself—more now at thirty-five than at twenty—might be more aggressive about living a

fulfilled life. I'd tackle the world, not surrender; but I can still understand Fish. (p. 313)

Amy Gonzalez is quite clear and poignant in her dialogue with Berkman. Berkman shares her experience and proves herself a powerful role model for young women in theatre. This chapter is an ideal example of the power of theatre for young women from an inside perspective.

Freire, P. (1993). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (pp. 68–104). New York: Continuum.

Freire writes a great deal in Chapter 3 about the "word." Freire believes that people can transform each other and the world, and the word is a means in which to do this (p. 71). This transformation will take place through acting upon the word. His work is insightful and raw; it examines the true experiences of those deemed oppressed.

We must never merely discourse on the present situation, must never provide the people with programs that have little or nothing to do with their own preoccupations, doubts, hopes and fears . . . It is not our role to speak to the people about our own view of the world, nor to attempt to impose the view on them, but rather to dialogue with the people about their view and ours. (p. 177)

Freire writes to a large extent on this sense of empowering people to value their own views and to have the hope to find this personal power and strength to achieve necessary change. Freire takes a philosophical look at the existence of human beings and how they differ from animals because they can reflect on their own actions and their sense of being, and act with change or discourse. Humans, being conscious, are responsible for situations and for change (p. 80).

Freire says that within the context of human existence themes exist in their relations with the world, with reference to concrete facts. He states that "we must

realize that the aspirations, the motives, and the objectives implicit in the meaningful thematics are human aspirations, motives, objectives" (p. 88).

There is a lot to be learned about reflection, human response and human dialogue in this chapter. As people discuss their world, they express their "level of awareness of reality" (p. 104). It seems that Friere wants to instill in people the ability to think for themselves and critique their present situation.

As human beings present in a world defined by power, Freire investigates to find out how things can be turned upside down or viewed differently through investigation and dialogue. Through the power of the word, people may experience change and empowerment. The chapter is highly theoretical, but is useful because Friere provides an explanation for his theory in practical terms for the oppressed.

Furman, L. (1997). Drama with an at-risk high school population: Making a difference. *Stage of the Art*, 9(3), 13-16.

Lou Furman presents a dynamic and an intriguing case in his article about creating and implementing meaningful drama experiences with a variety of students at Pullman High School in Washington. Using a "journal format" to disseminate information, Furman presents findings of students involved in the "alternative program" (p. 1). The journal format enables the reader to understand, almost first hand, the process that the author and his students went through.

He begins the process by lamenting about the difficulty of reaching a large group of students because they will not be doing "real" plays, but will be creating their own—consequently, the number of students varies between four and seven (p. 1). The 46 days of journal entries are presented with a roller-coaster ride of emotions as Furman realizes that "these are neither drama students nor typical high school students. It is a strain to keep them focused but their openness and sincerity are striking" (p. 13). In the article, Furman explains that students come and go, but a

core group remains intact that consists of teen moms, students in abusive relationships and many students fighting for personal identity.

Furman presents information about how the students begin discussing and developing scenes about issues that directly relate to or have affected them personally. The article depicts how real life is constantly bleeding through their discoveries and disclosures. Relationships, parenting, school, work, and so on are presented as a way of creating the drama, and battles ensue as a result. Consequently, one of the actors (Emily) describes in detail that she was "stressed by the dissension among the people who . . . [were] not leaving their problems outside the class" (p. 15). The group decides on procedural changes like time outs to ensure that friendships and bonds remain intact. A lot of storming occurs throughout the process as the students discover a forum for their voices.

Furman shares with delight the outcome of the project on day 46; the article describes the culminating performance, which is a source of pride for Furman and his students. After performing their piece on relationships, the actors take on the "role of facilitators for small group discussions that will lead to role plays by the class" (p. 16). Furman expresses that his actors have "become almost disciplined, mostly reliable, somewhat committed, and overall an ensemble" (p. 16).

This article is a good example of how drama can make a difference in the lives of students; whether by developing social skills, life skills, or finding voice, the students were empowered to discover more about themselves and consequently change.

Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a different voice: Psychological theory and women's development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Gilligan gives a critical overview of psychologists, including Freud and Piaget. Psychologists have developed confusing and disconnected theories by treating women as men. Over and over, developmental theories have been built on

observations of men's lives. Gilligan discusses that when women fail to develop in the ways that men do, the conclusion is that something may be perceived as wrong with women. Gilligan leaves us thinking, instead, that something must be wrong with the theory. If, for example,

Male development is mainly a matter of increasing separation from others to achieve autonomy and independence, does that mean that women have failed to grow into mature adults if their development involves a continuing and unresolved struggle to balance their responsibilities to others with their commitment to themselves? (p. xiii)

As we have listened for centuries to the voices of men and the theories of development that their experience informs, so we have come more recently to notice not only the silence of women but the difficulty in hearing what they say when they speak. Yet in the different voice of women lies the truth of an ethic of care, the tie between relationship and responsibility, and the origins of aggression in the failure of connection. (p. 174)

Gilligan's views of this dynamic give weight to her own view of female personality and create a view of human nature that has too long been one-sided. The product of many voices, this work creates a platform for valid discussion and the contemplation of women's roles.

Gilpin, D. (1998). Giving voice, empowering the powerless. *Stage of the Art*. 9(6), 7-10.

In this highly effective article by Don Gilpin, students attending West Windsor Plains High School in New Jersey are given the opportunity to "a) interview many of the people in our increasingly conflict-ridden school community; b) record and transcribe those interviews; c) take notes on interviewees' gestures, appearances, attire and 'props'; and d) represent those people as faithfully as possible" (p. 7). In his article, Gilpin notes that their agendas, though not intending to be political, became powerfully political (p. 7).

The article gives a clear overview of the students' activities, describing the inclusion of a wide range of people from the school community, and the storytelling about the school and the students lives in and out of school. Gilpin describes in detail their "daily production meetings, stories told/shared and the conflicts that were either avoided or faced" (p. 8). Gilpin explains that the culmination of the study was in fact a performance. The students performed their representations of their schoolmates and school climate on June 4, 1996, but not without controversy. Gilpin shares with the reader the distress noted by the principal of the school and the people who were left out yet wanted to be in the show! He notes the difficulty the actors experienced living day to day in school with the people they had portrayed on stage. Issues about individual feelings and personal respect surfaced through the study.

Gilpin realized that the project must also encompass the ideas of Brecht, Boal, and Freire and, therefore, compare and contrast the response and relationship of the audience to the actors. He concludes with the brilliant words of Freire: "As people engage in dialogical encounters with others they 'educate' each other through the mediation of the word" (p. 9).

The article shows that drama and theatre are a means to discuss issues within a community and to approach conflict with resolution and the respect of others in mind. During their exploration, the actors discovered that people really deserve to be treated and represented fairly in the world.

Heilbrun, C. (1988). *Writing a woman's life*. New York: Ballantine Books. W.W. Norton & Company.

Heilbrun states that those who write about women's lives have buried the truth about the female experience in order to make the "written life" (p. 12) conform to the expectations of what they feel life should be.

There are four ways to write a woman's life: the woman herself may tell it, in what she chooses to call an autobiography; she may tell it in what she

chooses to call fiction; a biographer, woman or man, may write the woman's life in what is called a biography; or the woman may write her own life in advance of living it, unconsciously, and without recognizing or naming the process. (p. 12)

Later in the work, Heilbrun piques interest in the reader because of her choice to use a pseudonym for her work as a publisher of detective novels; "I believe now that I must have wanted, with extraordinary fervor, to create a space for myself" (p. 113). "But I also sought another identity, another role. I sought to create an individual whose destiny offered more possibility than I could comfortably imagine for myself" (p. 114). The book discusses women who have tried to create positions of clear patterns in their lives rather than those who have traditionally posed to them.

Only in the last third of the twentieth century have women broken through to a realization of the narratives that have been controlling their lives.

Women poets of one generation—those born between 1923 and 1932—can now be seen to have transformed the autobiographies of women's lives, to have expressed, and suffered for expressing, what women had not earlier been allowed to say. (p. 60)

The text is a great journey in discovery of the female persona and the spaces that need to be created to implement the personae with great strength.

Janzing, M. (1996). Y.M.C.A. teen theatre project: A model for teen theatre development. *Stage of the Art*. 8(4), 9-12.

Marla Janzing opens this thought-provoking article with the terms "pregnancy, drug abuse, crime, violence, [and] suicide" (p. 9). Due to high risk problems such as these, adolescents often resort to what Janzing calls "acting out": a behavior psychiatrists define as compulsive, choiceless, impulsive and often disorganized—moves which are counterproductive and maladaptive" (p. 9).

Janzing adeptly continues her discussion with the notion that theatre can offer an opportunity for students to "release emotions and frustrations in a safe environment" (p. 9). As a result, her work (as it is described in the article) relates all of these theories to her work on the Y.M.C.A. Teen Theatre Project in Missoula beginning in 1991. Janzing states that the project is owned by the adolescents involved and is merely facilitated by two adults: an educational specialist and a drama coordinator.

The author relays to the reader specific accounts of educational drama sessions wherein thought-provoking theatre exercises, such as improvisation and role play, are implemented in order to spark reflective stories to be used through "drama process and theatre product" (p. 10). Student actors are encouraged to "put themselves into other people's shoes" (p. 10). Janzing explains that, through drama, adolescents learn to deal with their emotions, rather than denying these feelings and stuffing them down inside (p. 10). The work is also designed to "impact the members of the group and to reach out and educate the community" (p. 11).

By performing, teens improve their organizational and communication skills, and their work and personal stories help them feel validated (p. 11). The article is an excellent example of how students may feel and become empowered through community theatre and the drama process and can "take responsibility for their actions and even learn to save lives" (p. 12). The students are seen as role models and in the two periods were shown to have tackled many teen issues and found strength through their sense of ensemble and belonging.

Mabry, L. (1997). A dramatic difference in education in Chicago. *Stage of the Art*. 9(3), 17-22.

In her article, Mabry argues that the arts are engaging and, therefore, students will be motivated to learn. The premise for her study is the early 1990s work of Jackie Murphy, who began teaching playwriting in some of Chicago's most downtrodden

high schools. The project eventually "intersected with the Pegasus Players" (p. 17): a group of actors that tours high schools and urges students to present original work. As a result of the work previously done by Murphy and her students, the principal, and some teachers at Lake View High School in Chicago saw great educational potential in theatre.

The teachers, along with Murphy and the Pegasus Players, met twice a month between 1992 and 1993 after school to create an instructional program (p. 17). Mabry presents their philosophy: in a neighborhood where an estimated half the students drop out before graduation, kids must be kept in school (p. 17). The group believed that drama could make a difference as the activities engaged children and connected them to their learning.

The project faced financial problems in its developmental stage and had to revisit what they thought could be the bare necessities of the program and still have a positive affect on students. The article explains that teachers also began looking into integrating the arts along with academics as a way into the lessons for students. Sharing ideas about role play and making connections between grammar, language development, playwriting, and improvisational acting were evident as students were empowered to draw upon their own experience in English classes through the writing and sharing of their imaginations.

Mabry shares a conversation about students involved with the choreography of a dance. As the students develop ownership of the piece, they realize the implications of missing school.

"OK, OK, how are we going to do this?" Two girls offered ideas. "What does this mean for choreography? You have to change it. What does it mean for attendance?" Students' murmured responses indicated they realized everybody must attend class to keep up with the choreographic change. (p. 19)

The article takes a positive view of the arts in education and looks at the benefits for the school and students. One teacher was quoted in the article sharing the insight of her experience: "These lessons definitely went along with my curriculum. Nothing was neglected. Instead students were more productive because they were more excited. They were able to integrate everything they learned. . . . In the end, they really understood. I feel rewarded as a teacher" (p. 20).

Comments from other teachers are presented in the latter part of the article. Each is a positive statement about the excitement felt by students and how the work enabled them to stay connected and see the relevance to their lives. The program, despite financial strain, is in its fourth year. The teachers and partners, like Murphy and the Pegasus Players, see "real people with real names and real faces. Without education, these kids are going to fall out" (p. 22). The article is an excellent example of how hard work and dedication coupled with the art of drama can keep kids in school and truly engage their attention.

O'Hara, E. and Lanoux, C. (1999). Deconstructing Barbie: Using creative drama as a tool for image making in pre-adolescent girls. *Stage of the Art*. 10(3), 8-11.

The article, "Deconstructing Barbie," describes a critical investigation of drama as a tool for "image making in pre-adolescent girls" (p. 8). O'Hara and Lanoux provide a female perspective on the subject which seems a natural progression for two people who gravitated towards this issue as pre-service professionals due to discovering that "Educators have seen and demonstrated the value of drama and theatre in the formation of a positive self-image"(p. 8). The authors describe how their findings were then shared at the 1998 AATE (American Alliance for Theatre & Education) pre-conference on Multiculturalism and Diversity.

The authors also felt the aspects of diversity were necessary to explore, especially in "gender-specific child development" (p. 8). The succinct article looks at the ways girls conceptualize themselves. The terms "lookism, idealized feminine

beauty, the male gaze and crisis in confidence" (p. 8) are all discussed and presented along with body image and female self-worth. The authors delve into a detailed discussion of eating disorders relating to the above-mentioned terms. The authors include some interesting and disturbing statistics about eating disorders with respect to the media and family life.

As the discussion proceeds, it shifts to the early development of girls' sexuality. Since girls face being sexualized at a younger age now, they are less capable of defending themselves (p. 10). The authors voice concern over fears developed in women from their memories of girlhood as they "recognized that they were being judged, scrutinized and evaluated in a way the boys were not, and on a set of criteria different from the boys" (p. 10).

O'Hara and Lanoux express hope that through activities they have developed "young girls will gain the confidence to emerge as women in spite of her [Barbie]" (p. 10). Through the telling and re-enacting of their stories, girls will feel empowered to express their need for change or their desire for help in order to change.

Pipher, M. (1994). *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the selves of adolescent girls* (pp. 62-71). New York: First Ballantine Books.

This highly emotional, evocative, and informative text hurls you headfirst into the personal accounts of adolescent girls and their experiences with eating disorders, abuse, drugs and alcohol, parents, and schooling. The author, Mary Pipher, Ph.D., offers her incredible insight as a therapist by presenting the stories of the lives of adolescent girls. The text provides a great foundation for understanding the behavior of young females, not only in social terms, but also in scholastic or academic situations.

Pipher's sympathetic advocacy for young girls' survival is engaging and empowering from my own female perspective. Through case histories, Pipher

brings up literary examples, medical insight, and many positive female role models from the past and present society. A large portion of the book centres around media influence, which is presented as affecting girls' body image. Another valuable view that Pipher presents is the realm of personal expectations, eating disorders, and overall expected behavior. These factors are investigated, which "provide one of many motivators for certain feelings of self-worthlessness or lack of esteem in females is presented" (p. 63).

The book presents an insightful section about the schooling and development of female "academic selves," studying how schools have treated boys and girls differently. "In classes, boys are twice as likely to be seen as role models, but five times as likely to receive teacher's attention and twelve times as likely to speak up in class" (p. 62).

The section, "Developmental Issues," focuses on gender and deals with concrete examples of why girls may not be as empowered by schools: they are not as likely to be called on as boys, or to be praised, or to receive as much attention (p. 63). Pipher explains that girls' success is attributed to good luck and hard work, and their failure to lack of ability; with every failure, girls' confidence is eroded (p. 64). This chapter continues with the investigation of why girls' confidence suffers, particularly during adolescence, and Pipher draws interesting comparisons between being accepted, wanting to be seen as feminine to males, and worrying about image (p. 64).

The entire book, but specifically this chapter, looks at how female adolescents question their identity and self-worth on what can be a daily basis. The sad and triumphant are shared in the pages of *Reviving Ophelia* as young girls struggle to discover who they are and where they can find their strength.

This thorough and well-written text offers sound theory and practice for student development with drama as the medium. Brian Way focuses in-depth on individual development and drama as a means for personal growth. To Way, drama is concerned with the "individuality of individual, with the uniqueness of each human essence" (p. 3). The pragmatic nature of the book enables studies where people's natural ability can develop creatively and expressively. The growth and realization of the senses and reaction and stimulation of the imagination through the sense is a main focus for student development through drama as seen in chapter 7, "Sensitivity and Characterization" (p. 156).

This highly useful and explanatory chapter focuses on the growth of the individual through a progression of the gradual development of "consciousness of self, not just at an intellectual level of perception, but emotional and spiritually as well" (p. 158). Way discusses what he believes to be the "root of well being" as it relates to "sympathy and compassion" and the "sensitivity of the emotional experience of others" (p. 159). Way presents a number of practical exercises to aid in the development of sensitive awareness: "mirroring, following the leader, blind statues which can be performed in pairs or small groups and a suggestion of group sensitive exercises that involve the whole class" (pp. 161-169).

Way believes that exercises in sensitivity can help both the external and inner growing awareness of an individual (p. 172). He shares his insight into dramatic action as follows:

Intuitive characterization is part of the intended development of existing individual resources; it supplies at a simple, natural, organic level, the opportunity of being the characters of one's imagination mixed with the growing awareness of the *real* world and the discovery of "self" and "not-self," which is part of the orientation towards becoming part of that real world, gradually becoming more and more aware of oneself—and the uniqueness and individuality of that self and also aware of the existence of others. (pp. 173-174)

Way describes the process as slow but tangible for students. Through the process of drama, Way explains that students may try out the "ifs" and "what happened whens?". Sometimes teachers may experience the negative aspects of this when students portray dark or undesirable characters, but Way emphasizes that, from this and other kinds of dramatic work on characterization, comes the realization that some events and actions in life are shaped by people (p. 182). "It is through this development of characterization—of awareness and of sensitivity to people of every kind—that can bring significance to the trivial, and rich experience to the most commonplace situations" (p. 182).

The text, specifically Chapter 7, stresses the slow pace and the many aspects of development in the individual, from self-consciousness to personality to situations of conflict. Nevertheless, the storm is depicted; and a strong sense of individuality and personal growth can be achieved as drama is seen as one of the enablers of this development.

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